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Adventure
A POPULAR PUBLICATION
BAHAMA BOTTOM
by GORDON MacCREAGH
OVERCOAT JOHNNY
by HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS
ARTHUR O. FRIEL
JOHNSTON McCULLEY
TOM ROAN

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Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

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Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Hans A. Schnell, 253 Cumberland St., Brooklyn, wants word of his brother Fred Schnell, last known address Middlesex Hospital, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Gilbert Thompson, about 43, Swede, former member of Medical Corps 89th Division during 1917-1918. Last heard of he was living in Clouqet, Minn., in 1925. Anyone knowing of him please write to James C. McKinney, CO. 3855 C.C.C., Groveland, Calif.

Anyone who was in the 4th Casual Company, Camp Lewis, Washington, please write to Clarence Parker, Gerber, California.

James P. FitzGerald, serving aboard the *U.S.S. West Virginia* in 1933, write to K. Downes, 231 George St., Peterboro, Canada.

Information desired regarding James Conroy Kennedy, originally from Wisconsin, last heard from in 1929 while working on construction project near Barranquilla, Colombia, S.A.—A. Kennedy, 2209 Barnard St., Savannah, Ga.

Wanted: Address of Alfred Willy, who was at Los Zanos, Philippine Islands, in 1915, Alfred W. Southwick, 78 Burnside Avenue, Newport, R. I.

Emile Cuschina, of San Jose, California, get in touch with old friend Bill Gianella, Marysville, Calif.

(Continued from page 4)

Wanted—word from Otto Meyne, formerly Battery D, 7th Field Artillery, Madison Barracks, N. Y. Nevin Hayes, 1012 Wood St., Wilkinsburg, Pa.

John V. Gatton, now 27, last heard from leaving Joplin, Mo., for New Orleans, in 1931. Notify mother, Mrs. Ida Gatton, Danvers, Montana.

Word wanted of Jack Oliver Hanlon, who left his home in Seattle, Wash., Oct. 23, 1932, and was a regular reader of Adventure. Notify his mother, Mrs. W. F. Hanlon, 2321 Fairview No., Seattle, Wash.

I would like to get in touch with Edwin P. Ford, ex-marine, *U.S.S. New Mexico*. Believe him to be in Baltimore, Maryland. H. C. Price, Route 1, Box 380, Modesto, California.

Duane William Peterson, was last heard from in Fort Bayard, New Mexico. Was formerly with Coast Artillery Corps —7th, Fort Scott, San Francisco. Mrs. Justina Rennie Cranz, 6298 Del Valle Drive, Los Angeles, California, wishes words of him.

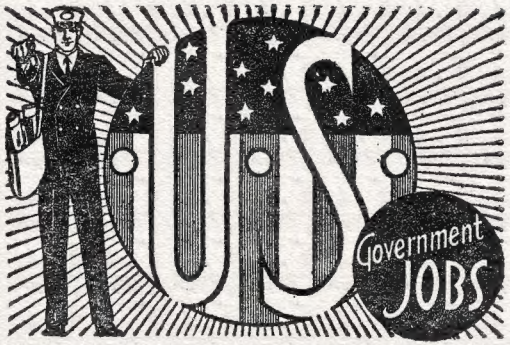
S. F. Wilson, U. S. Navy, would like to know the whereabouts of Harvey Ingersoll last heard of living at 509 Ganson Street, Jackson, Michigan. Write to him at 5529 Cranshaw, Detroit, Michigan, or U.S.S. Bridge, Mare Island, California.

Louis P. Stilwell, 100 Buckingham Rd., Brighton 1, Sussex, England, would welcome any news of his buddy, Louis Hudson, heard of in Lewes, England in 1918 and later in New York.

Wanted: Address of Frank S. Jones, Was in Laona, Cal., then Los Angeles, when last heard from. Communicate with E. C. Wilcox, Yellowstone Park, Wyo.

Word wanted of Russell Stanley, formerly of 838 Jannette Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia. Was in Co. F, 20th Infantry, from January 1930, to January, 1933. Communicate with Sgt. David H. Wagner, Hq. Company, 27th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, T. H.

Word wanted of Burton Funnell, who lived in Norwich, N. Y. and is racetrack enthusiast. Please communicate with Philip Schleit, 164 Durston Ave., Syracuse, New York.



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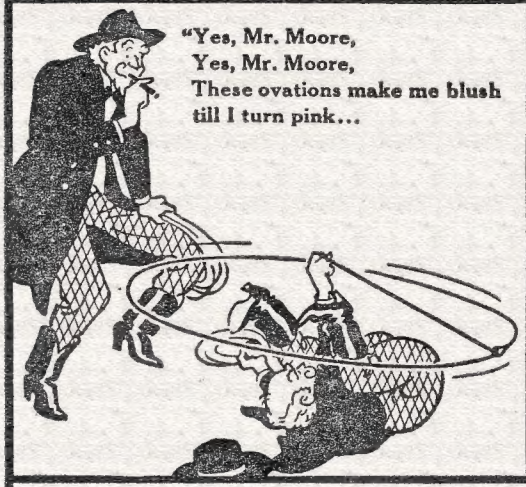

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BAHAMA BOTTOM

A novelette

By GORDON MacCREAGH

THE whole of Jared Hardy's dour New England soul rebelled against this damn foolishness. Traipsing around back Bahamas flats in a balky motor boat piled high with all his expensive diving gear—alone. Alone! That was what made it so dumb. Only a fool would contemplate diving without a competent crew to hold the deck above him.

But there he was, stuck with this stupidity. A job at Nassau just cleaned up, his crew already away on the first steamer—and this cable comes from the girl! Hysterical, pleading that he had promised and she had always known

she could rely on him, whatever might happen.

Jared spat his disgust on the engine and watched it sizzle. True, he had promised, and the more dumb fool he. The girl wouldn't marry him—pulled all the usual stuff about respect for fine qualities and be a sister and all that; but he was too rough and tough, and that was final. And he—emotional goat—he had stuck his neck out. If she ever needed him, he'd be there.

Jared spat again, and the engine shuddered and nearly stopped altogether. Cripes! What crazy things a female would demand of a man! Cabled him, weeping. Please, dear old friend, would he go and help out Cal Benton on the Diesel yacht *Pirate*, owner, Phineas T. Symms, anchored in Eleuthera Cut?

Cal Benton. A blasted college mechanic who invented rat traps or what-all rubbish. And a coward at that! He had refused to fight Jared for the girl. Refined, Cal was. That's what the girl liked, she said. Cal didn't go about brawling and bulling his way through things.

As a matter of fact, not many people would leap to joyous battle with Jared Hardy. The name suited him. Close to two hundred, as hard as his tough profession demanded of a man, and with a face like he'd carved it himself out of something that he'd found forty fathoms deep.

It was only his uncompromising New England conscience that impelled Jared to go and keep that promise. Handing the girl the other fellow on a silver plate, that's what he was going to do. Fool promise to start with and the more fool he to keep it. Twenty times doubled fool even to think about it without a trained deck crew. But the cable had been quite hysterical. "Desperately important. Every minute counted. Cal's whole future"—blether, blether, blether, a good fifteen dollars worth all the way from New York.

That kind of money thrown away on a cable could hurt any New Englander. Of course, the girl had added that if Jared could deliver the goods on this job there would be a pile of money in it. That could stimulate a New England conscience to quite a deed or two. But it didn't prevent a man from being good and mad about it.

JARED was mad even at the sight of the *Pirate*, gleaming white and winking brass in the sun. He had had his experience with yachtsman inefficiency before now—lines stupidly fouled with propellers, copper sheathing stripped off the bottom where any ape who could read a chart would know there was no depth. This one looked to be all of a hundred and twenty feet, as he came closer. He grunted. Just that much more room for unnecessary brass and monkeyshine.

He eased alongside, and his angry mood boiled as hot as the engine. Two men stood at the polished rail and made no move to help him.

He roared at them. "Heave a line there, if there's such a thing as a sailorman aboard." He pointed his demand with hot eyes at one of the men who was dressed as much like an admiral as the navy would allow him. The other man wore a white double-breasted reefer and yachting cap. He was young and well fed, and he possessed all the poise of one who was born to command—because his father had left it to him.

They did not heave a line. They looked, rather, at Jared's pile of gear with surprise and a little suspicion. The near-admiral said to the other man:

"News certainly travels fast in these parts, sir. I hardly thought there'd be one any nearer than Norfolk. He might serve the purpose, if by any luck he knows his stuff."

Jared had to keep the engine grumbling along against the fast tide that raced through Eleuthera Cut.

"Heave a line," Jared roared again. "Or go to hell. I don't care much which."

The owner ignored that. Instead, he asked: "How did you know we needed a diver? Who sent you?"

"Got a cable from—" Jared's shout rasped out in his throat. He couldn't admit to these supercilious lubbers any such fool reason as that cable from a girl.

"Came on a job for Cal Benton," he said.

"Cal Benton?" Both men said it at the same time. And, "Trying to slip one over," the owner added. "Don't let the fellow aboard."

The yacht captain motioned with his thumb, like he might be ordering a Bahama bumboat to sheer off. Jared acted on the order according to his own code. He jumped forward and took two half hitches of a line around the stubby bitts; and if the launch in the meanwhile should sheer in, instead of off, and should scrape some immaculate white paint, that was the yacht's look-out.

"Don't take his line," the owner ordered. "We don't want him if he's for Benton."

Jared jumped aft, line in hand. He snapped off the ignition, reached a wicked boat hook to the yacht's mahogany rail, made a flying tackle, and the next moment was hoisting a long leg over the rail. Methodically he first made fast his line and with sailorman instinct told the command at large, "Send someone to sling bumpers." Then with shoulders hunched forward and thumbs stuck belligerently in his belt, he said:

"I told you opera sailors I came on a job for Cal Benton. You wanna argue about it?"

"Throw him overboard," said the owner. "Damned thug! Come on!"

IT WAS the near admiral who reached him first. Jared got one big fistful of the almost navy uniform collar and lurched his whole weight, not back, but forward. The swing of his arm slung the man amongst crashing chairs on the spacious after deck that on a lesser boat would have been a cockpit. The other flailing arm sideswiped the owner and staggered him up against the aft cabin companionway, from which he caromed and slowly sat down on a life preserver locker.

The flaming violence of the man left the two dizzy and gagging for breath, but it drew an appalled comment from a third party.

"God, man. What are you—"

As if the jolt had communicated itself to him, there stood Cal Benton, transfixed as he came along the port side of the deck house.

"Ho!" Jared barked at him. "It's you! Stand by port side there an' bat any monkey of the crew that sticks his nose close enough."

Unnerved, Cal Benton still stared at owner and skipper. Jared glowered at him and himself took up a folding chair, the only weapon in sight. A man dressed in the spotless white of a petty officer on shore leave in Honolulu came down the starboard deck. Jared motioned with his chair.

"Back to your station, monkey!" he ordered. "There's enough weight aft right now."

The man gawped and stood looking to his skipper for orders.

"Tell him," Jared growled menacingly

The captain, out of his wreckage of chairs, motioned the man away, but his sandy brows stood suddenly white against the hot rage in his face. Captains on their own ships have killed men for less.

"Okay," Jared growled. "Now we can talk social. First, any guns aboard?—*You!*" He roared it at Cal Benton.

Cal jumped. "Mr. Symms has a sporting rifle in his stateroom."

"Get it."

Cal ducked down the companionway. Jared scowled at the two men, who were slowly getting to their feet. Cal came back with the gun. Jared took it and stepped to the side, but his conscience twinged him. "I'll bet this cost a heap o' money." He dropped the gun into his launch. "You may get it back yet," he told Mr. Symms sourly. And then, his smoldering mood relieved by his explosion, he grinned. "You two bear in mind the rules o' hospitality, an' we'll be sociable yet. You—" to Cal—"come forrard an' gimme the log o' this crazy lay-out. What's this job you want done so crying bad?"

Forward, other members of the yacht's crew, all clean and neat and white, looked at Jared slant-eyed, appraising him. If the order would come from aft to gang up on the man they would, but they hoped not.

Jared found an awning stanchion against which he could lean and keep the edge of his eye on his launch while he appraised the depth of the water and estimated the force of the tide.

"Shoot it," he ordered Cal.

CAL was a fair enough looking youth: big, well set up, nicely dressed, the pallor of his face that of a student. Taking him all around, he would pass anywhere in a city. All of him the ultimate, farthest end opposite of Jared's deep sea ruggedness. Jared's face curled as he looked at Cal. He couldn't quite help it. "Well, come ahead, what's the lay-out?"

Young Benton flushed, watching Jared's face. Then he shrugged.

"It's like this, Jared. I'm inventing a gadget, and—"

"What sort of gadget? Another peanut sheller?"

"No, it's a—well, it's going to be a depth finder, and—"

Jared was professionally interested, but skeptical still of anything that Cal might produce. "Y'ain't trying to tell me you've got something useful?"

"This time I think I've got something." The enthusiasm of the inventor began to overlay Cal's nervousness. "The idea is, you can lower it with a string. It's compact and light, like those lead things that people swing from a platform on the side of a ship, and you can throw it ahead and a dial will tell you what depth you're coming to before you get there."

"By golly!" Jared nodded understanding. "It's an idea, at that."

"We figure there ought to be a lot of money in it. Mr. Symms is crazy about it, and if you can recover it, you'll get—"

"Wait a minute. Leave what I'll get till I decide whether I'll be fool enough to go down off of this hostile ship. Diving ain't like pickin' up something you dropped out of a window. So it's gone overboard, huh? How?"

"Well, it's like this. Old Man Symms financed a few little things for me, you know. So when he died I brought this to his son, and—well, he doesn't deal as straight as the old man did. He told me to go ahead and sent a machinist to work out a model with me. Trouble is, the machinist brought the model straight to Mr. Symms here, and Mr. Symms says it's his because his machinist made it, and—"

"Pirated it, by the Eternal! It isn't the first time. Poor guy thinks it, rich slob gets it. So how come it went overside?"

"Well, I came on board to talk with him about it. There was a struggle, and—"

"Don't try an' tell me *you* had a struggle with that guy."

Well, sort of. Between the two of us it slipped and went over."

Jared laughed and shrugged his big shoulders. "So what's the fuss? You got your papers; you'll make another."

"It's not as simple as that. You see, the thing wasn't perfected. I need the model to see just what was wrong. And Mr. Symms knows if he can get the model, he can get any engineer to dope it out for a few hundred dollars. He has sent for a diver from New York. So time is desperately important, don't you see?"

"Yeah." Jared's mouth was pinching down to a wide and rather grim line. "Only one thing I don't see—how come you're still aboard and that pirate hasn't cut your throat?"

"If the model is lost—if a diver can't find it—he'll still need me. He hasn't my drawings."

"Got you, tide come or go, huh? Gorry, it's money talks."

"Yes, but you ought to be able to get it without much trouble. That's what makes immediate action so important. The water is clear here. It's a sand bottom and it fell just where that stairway hangs down to the water from the deck. And it's only forty feet; I dropped a string over and measured it."

It all came out of Cal Benton in an eager rush. More was on his lips, but they froze at the expression on Jared's face staring at him.

"It fell overboard right by the accommodation ladder?" Jared digested that astounding piece of landsman logic slowly. He champed his teeth over it to

"I came on a job for Cal Benton. You wanna argue about it?"

taste its whole futility. "Gawdy sakes!" He stared at sky and sea and wind and he talked wonderingly to himself.

"Yesterday I got that crazy cable, and you must've cabled her the day before. Two days, an' the tide's running a good five knots through the cut now, swingin' ship three quarters offshore. An' you don't know what the tide was then, nor wind nor drift nor current, nor not a damn thing. Feller, you got ideas besides inventing rat traps. You're tryin' to tell a diver this gadget might be lyin' on sea bottom anywheres in a circle as wide as ship can swing on her cable. That's a lot of territory, if you don't know it."

Jared looked at Cal Benton all the way up and down, as though admiring a strange museum piece. He scowled at the blue water, at the flat shore line, at the ship's cable trailing taut from the bow.

"But the damn robbers can't get away with it," he growled. "Money is money, even if she'll marry you on it. Come on, brains, we'll go start a fuss with the owner."

MR. SYMMS and his skipper looked sourly at Jared's intrusion; both unconsciously conceding the next play to him.

"All right," he told them. "I'm going after this thing." To the skipper he said: "Detail a couple of your monkeys to get my stuff aboard—and tell 'em it's healthy stuff to handle with care."

Mr. Symms stood up, his face was streaked with little purple veins of rage. He took a furious step forward, and then thought better of it. Speech was the better part of valor.

"Look here, you can't go taking command of my ship like this."

"No?" Jared grinned at him as invitingly as a hungry lion.

But Mr. Symms had received an idea.

"Listen," he said. "There is money in this thing. I'll talk with you."

"Yes?" said Jared, as non-committal as a hard glass helmet port.

"A lot of money," said Mr. Symms. "If you will get the thing and turn it over to me—" He paused significantly, inviting Jared's reaction.

"Yeah," Jared said slowly. "That's what divers risk their lives for. So good businessmen can make a lot of money. And suppose your kind of business can't hire me and I turn the thing over to this dope, how much do you stand to lose? Plenty, I'll bet, if this gadget is worth anything. So what d'you offer?"

Mr. Symms was shrewdly businesslike. "You can't hold me up for any exorbitant wage. I'm getting another diver from New York anyhow. So talk sense."

"Sense is," Jared growled, "that your only danger is I may find the thing an' turn it over to Benton, an' if I had any I wouldn't ever go down on a setup o' this sort. But let it ride. I'll talk with you when I bring the thing up —If!"

That is as far as the New England conscience would go with compromise. Jared turned from the owner to his skipper; it never occurred to him to let the owner pass along the orders.

"Pass out a kedge and haul your ship around to your bearings when the thing went overboard."

The captain showed how much he thought of any compromise by saying immediately: "I have no bearings."

Jared looked at him as he had looked at Cal Benton before. "Something worth a pile o' money goes overboard, an' you're dressed all up like a sailorman an' took no bearings on the jump?"

The captain reddened up and through tight-bitten teeth said: "I wasn't on deck. I didn't know about it till later."

But Cal Benton showed unexpected courage.

"He was too." he accused hotly. "He was right here, helping Mr. Symms to to take the thing away from me. And there were some of the crew present too."

Jared took two long strides and shot out a big hand to take a fistful of the same collar front that his last attention had mussed all up. With it he jerked the captain's face close to his own.

"You!" his voice was sandpaper on old dry paint. "You're playin' to have me raise hell on you so your gang can jump me while I'm busy. You got your nerve, fella. I can't seem to get worried. Go on, get busy with that kedge. I'll want to be down by mid-afternoon."

He let go of the captain's chest front, and the man backed away on stiff legs, his arms stiff beside him, his throat too stiff with rage to be able to talk.

The captain walked forward as stiff as if he might be in a trance.

"You!" Jared barked at Cal. "Get an' take charge of that gun I dropped into the launch. An' *hold* it! Dont' let 'em wrestle it overboard out of your hands."

CHAPTER II

FOOL'S ERRAND

THREE immaculate sailor sort of men came before Jared and saluted smartly. He looked at them with distaste.

"Save the navy stuff for your admiral," he growled; and, "Cripes! Ain't you got any dungarees for a job o' work? Or ain't there a job o' work on this kind a ship?" He shrugged the question from him. "All right, stage hands, your clothes will be your owner's funeral.

Drop your accommodation ladder an' haul the launch alongside. There's nothing you can't carry up, an' you'll assemble right here on deck. I'll go off of a monkey ladder over the side; I got it right with my gear."

That was the beginning of the most strenuous and acrimonious morning those three men had ever known. Jared was like a fussy mother over his gear.

"Listen, you apes," he snarled at them. "A diver, once he's below surface, is a man alone in another world. He can't come up an' kick you in the belly if you bungle. An' if you do bungle, the diver likely dies. Get it? Now then, the two of you man pump handles an' practise on an even stroke. *You!* Pay out hose line overboard an' haul in; get the feel o' tide drag on it so you'll know when it snarls anything solid. An' if you ever let it snarl, me under, I'll come up an'—" He fumed hot lava at the man's inexpertness. "*Practise* it, monkey! Till I go see how the admiral is kedging his ship to position. Damned if I think he knows how to drop a kedge."

He stormed away and directed that operation under the pale hate of the captain's eyes. Mr. Symms scowled at him, and he grinned truculently back. "Maybe your money can buy me yet, big shot. Figure what the gadget is worth to you while I'm gone."

It was not the rifle that Cal Benton held that dominated the ship. Jared beckoned Cal and stormed back to his deck crew, ragged and smarting under insult.

"Keep at it, you," he growled at them; and to Cal: "I'll need a hand with the rubber suit. Stick the gun in your pant's belt. Stick it—aw, th' hell with it! Here, hold these rubber pants while I climb in."

It was like getting into a great union suit. Cal, tugging at its stiff folds, whispered nervously:

"I don't know that you ought to be doing this. The skipper and Mr. Symms —I've been watching them, the way they get their heads together. There'd be a lot of money involved if you didn't —if the thing wasn't brought up—I mean, if I didn't get the gadget and his New York diver did."

Jared laughed sourly. "I ain't afraid o' them. What can they do? They wouldn't go cuttin' my air lines or anything. Not that I'd put either of 'em above it. But shucks, there's too many witnesses. Here, smear a lick o' soapsuds outa that bottle on these rubber cuffs so I can shove my hands through. Naw, I got no worry about these bandits. Shoulder harness screws over these studs with wing nuts."

Cal Benton looked at Jared's grim hardihood with eyes in which wonder and grudging appreciation mingled. "Well, I wish I could feel as confident as—" And it burst from him: "Dammit, man, aren't you afraid of anything?"

"Afraid?" It burst from Jared in a renewed flame of irritation. "Godalmighty, I'm scared stiff. Not o' them, but I got the willies these monkeys on deck will pull some boner. Them an' you. Cripes, a diver's dumb as a sea cow to go down without a crew knowing its business!"

MONSTROUS in his rubber suit, he swung to take out his admitted nervousness on his amateurs.

"Now get this, you two apes. This is a pump an' these are handles, like I said. Never mind about the rest—you'll never grasp pressure ratios. You'll take these handles an' *pump!* You'll keep on pumping, hell or high tide, an' you'll hold this mark on the gauge here. If you don't, you'll find it healthy to fix it so I never come up. That's all you got to do. But *do* it.

Cal, you'll hold the watch on me, an' at thirty minutes you'll telephone me an' I'll come up. I'm takin' no chances on stayin' down longer and have anybody get rattled an' forget decompression tables."

"What is decompression?" Cal asked innocently.

Jared bit his lips and drew a stertorous breath.

"You won't understand decompression—or you might, at that, if you can invent a depth finding gadget; but I got no time. Decompression means, if it goes wrong, compressed nitrogen bubbles form in a diver's blood an' he'll get all tied into knots with the bends and

he'll likely die. Get that? So, thirty minutes, no more.

"You!" He whirled on the third man. "I've picked you for the smartest, the guy to handle air hose an' life line. Life! Understand? You'll pay out an' take in as I move around below; and you'll hold light-taut at all times so there's no loops trailin' out in the current, gettin' fouled over coral an' things. The minute you don't feel me movin' let Cal telephone. More divers die from dumb line tenders n' from all the teeth an' tentacles under sea.

"Okay, Cal. Your's is watch an' telephone. Anybody knows how to talk into a phone. The line will pay out with hose an' air lines. Anything happens on deck, telephone me. Sharks an' such come nosin' around, telephone. An', if you know how to use that gun at all, shoot at 'em just forrard of the dorsal fin. Draw blood, an' it'll keep all other fish busy where the blood is. Anything at all happens, *telephone!*"

With set lips and a giant determination to make good, Cal took up the telephone. Its loop caught on the hasp of the battery box. The jerk pulled the instrument loose from his fingers. It clunked jarringly onto the deck!

The silence that followed was one of complete and all pervading paralysis. Even Jared's ready profanity gagged in his throat as he snatched the instrument up and shook it near his ear. It rattled ominously. Violently he shoved it at the nearest man. "Holler into it!" He clapped his round copper helmet over his head.

"Hello," the man said.

Jared's face looked at him, contorted through the thick glass plate. It shook negatively.

"Hello! Hello!" The man shouted.

Jared lifted the helmet from his head. His voice was bleak with the utterness of disgust.

"That, the last blasted straw! Finished! That lets me out!"

Cal Benton stared at him.

His throat worked in furious effort to push dry croaks from him. "Finished? You can't go down?"

Jared flung away from them all. In a fury of helplessness he clumped in his heavy boots to the rail and gripped its hard mahogany with both hands so that he wouldn't use them to do murder.

A laugh snickered up from the after deck. Owner and captain stood there, enjoying the final climax.

Mr. Symms teetered on his natty shoe soles and made a show of lighting a cigarette. "I guess that settles it. And very nicely. My diver will arrive in a few days, and, find the thing or not, Mr. Benton, I am sure, will be amenable."

The captain neighed like a horse.

FOR long minutes Jared glowered down at the still water, only his lips moving. Then slowly his head lifted and he glowered at the sky and the clouds. He sniffed at the light breeze to test its strength. He scowled round over his shoulder to all his ready apparatus. Then he flung back to stand spraddle-legged over the gear like some veritable armored monster of another world. And finally, as it might be some great deep sea turtle, he turned his neck in its copper casing to fix opaque eyes on the complacent owner and his skipper.

Then he grinned back at them.

"Naw," he said. "I ain't finished. I never started a divin' job yet an' got nowhere. An' I've started on this one. I'm goin' down an' be damned to you."

Savagely he swung round to the line tender. "Listen, you. I told you this was a *life* line. I'm givin' you just three signals to keep in your head. You forget 'em, an' if I ever come up out of it, they'll collect you with a mop. Listen—

"You give two tugs means you want me to come up. Repeat till I answer two. I give three tugs means I want up. Repeat an' gather in line as I come. I give four tugs means stop till further signal. Just three signals! Got 'em? Simple enough even for a yacht sailor. An' the rest of you remember 'em too, so you can remind him. You, Squid-fingers!" This was to Cal. "Gimme my helmet."

Cal brought it to him and, "Jared I —I don't know what to say," he began.

"Cut it," Jared growled.

"Yes, but—I mean, it's taking an awful chance."

"A diver's job is chances," Jared growled.

"I don't know how to excuse myself or to thank you. But you're doing a tremendous thing for me, and—"

"Ain't doin' it for you," Jared growled. "Doin' it for her, like I promised." Rage surged over him again. "An' you can tell her I'm as big a fool as you, an' she's got her choice."

Savagely he lifted the helmet over his head and gave it the quarter twist that clamped its gasket down against the neck harness. Savagely he untwisted it again and lifted it to glare at the pump crew.

"Pump, you apes!" he snarled at them. "What d'you think I live on in here?"

Cal Benton's face worked.

"If I can ever do anything for you, I—"

Jared grumbled, "The hell with anything for me. But show me just one brain, one gut, one handiness about anything; just once—and all right, I'll say she isn't too good for you."

He jammed the helmet over his head again and heaved himself ponderously over the rail onto his monkey ladder. Clumsily his feet felt for the rungs and went down and the water closed over him.

He took hold of the descent line and swung clear of the ladder. Too much air. He cursed the pump men for over eagerness and pushed his head against the release valve spindle in the helmet. Slowly he sank. A stream of silvery bubbles marked his going.

Cal watched them, fascinated, chilled. There's always something frightening to the layman about a diver alone in another element, leaving his whole well-being in the hands of men on deck. An awful responsibility suddenly cramped his breathing.

He felt a weight on the rail at his side. Mr. Symms and his skipper leaned beside him, watching the bubbles too. They said nothing.

Cal stared at the face of his watch, as though thirty minutes were racing as fast as seconds.

THE FAST current below the ship's keel caught at Jared's legs and swung them away out, like a pendulum. That was all right. His outfit was the most modern available—he was never a fool about such things. Laced legs. He could literally fall on his head and not have them balloon with air and leave him kicking helplessly.

His hand on the descent line touched first. Hard white sand and crystal clear Bahamas water. That much he had expected, of course, or he would have hesitated about taking so much of a chance with an amateur crew. If this thing were down there he would find it. A cylinder shaped thing, Cal had told him, somewhat larger than a heaving lead and shiny. Easy to see, though a stiff tide like that could roll it over a hard bottom.

Jared gathered his feet up under him. Standing, holding the descent line, he adjusted the air valve on the outside of his helmet until his rubber suit was

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blown just comfortably loose on him; meaning that his air pressure was three or four pounds more than the water pressure at his depth of forty feet.

He bent into the stiff current and pushed away from the line. As he figured the tide tables, the current would have been coming in when the thing dropped. It was running out now. He would have to buck the current, quartering the ground till he might find the thing.

Leaning into the current, the glass plate of his helmet a bare three feet from the ocean floor, his leaden boots pushed silvery clouds of sand behind him. Strenuous work, but at that depth it didn't bother his strong lungs. Heck, with a regular crew and a competent line tender he'd stay in that water all afternoon.

A low jungle of polyps glimmered up before him; purple and pink and pale green, exquisite tentacles waving incessantly, waiting for the current to bring food to them. A tall magenta sea fan waved, as though to keep them cool. Farther, a massive tree coral, orange with white tipped branches. Parrot fish and blue striped grunts and white angels played in the fairy sea garden.

Jared cursed it and kept clear. Not with an amateur line tender would he venture into any such tangle. Not unless he should espy that pestilent gadget right in the middle of a bed. In which case he'd just damn the line tender once more and go get it. And then what?

JARED plowed on to a low mass of dead coral and braced himself against it to contemplate that thought. He lay back against the current, looking upward.

There was enough ripple on the water's surface to set up a million refractive angles. It was like looking up at one of those translucent but non-transparent wavy glass screens. Whatever came through the surface was visible; everything above was lost. To his right, where he had left it, was the dark bulk of the yacht's hull. Barnacles and long trailers of weed clung to it.

Near the great hull was the oval little shape of the dinghy's bottom. Close to that, with the curious effect of a rope slanting up to hang on nothing, was the stern cable. Nothing else. The world above and the world below were divided, cut off from each other by that shimmery screen.

As they were in grim truth. Above water and below. Two different worlds with their utterly different needs for life.

The stream of exhaust air bubbled up in silver globules to boil through the surface glitter and disappear. Fish, hopefully attracted, came and nibbled at them.

A flashing streak of pale yellow indicated a barracuda, come to nibble at the fish. They whisked away. A long gray shape—lean and cut for speed—drifted near to investigate.

Jared loosened the screw of his diving knife in its sheath at his belt. Sharks were not so much to bother about, but they could be a nuisance, particularly if a diver should cut his hand on sharp coral or anything. Blood would bring them like wolves. But there were worse things than sharks below sea.

Jared's eyes went to the slanting curve of his life lines trailing up from the sea floor. His disgust exploded.

"Blast the idiot! Slack enough to skip rope."

But what could he do about it? Damn, he couldn't line signal like to a regular tender; he had given the fool only three signals to remember. It was a plain half-witted thing to come down without a telephone. Wait till he'd get up again and do a job on that tender, if—

That deadly little word obtruded. Divers who did half-witted things often didn't go up again. Damn a stern New England conscience and all silly promises. Cripes, how a fool's loose talk could tie him up in a mess!

Jared heaved himself off his rock and plowed into the stiff current again, slowly zig-zagging in his search.

And then the devil, who can live under water just as well as above, insinuated his malicious presence.

Jared's course was approaching a

dark bank, a terraced cliff of coral that loomed across his path. From above he had already noted the roiled water of the submerged reef. It was just the kind of obstruction that would stop a cylindrical object rolling with the current. Jared skirted along its base, heaving slowly against the water that was like a solid thing against his body. And there, all of a sudden, the thing was, gleaming metallically on the white sand, neatly pocketed against the cliff in the angle of a fallen coral block where the current could roll it no farther. Perfectly placed as only the devil could place it.

Jared grunted satisfaction and heaved himself towards it. His hoseline dragged at his helmet. He cursed the blasted incompetence of the whole ape crew up there and took the line in his hand to drag just the necessary couple of feet to him. It gave unwillingly. Not enough.

"Snagged, by th' Almighty!" He bit futile rage through his teeth and stood with clenched fists, glaring. And then his eyes, ever wary of coral, saw something else—the very incarnation of the devil himself!

In that hole from which the coral lump had fallen, it was. Thick and mottled green, with evil, opaque eyes and a gaping mouthful of saw-sharp teeth!

A moray! The most ferocious of the eel tribe. One of the things below sea that could be worse than sharks or octopi!

that morays could grow to ten or eleven feet, veritable sea serpents. With a snap of those murderous teeth, they could make shreds of a diver's air hose.

In characteristic pose the thing held its head curved erect, like an angry cobra—and the damned things, Jared knew, always seemed to be angry about something. The gills in its bloated neck, pulsing strongly, looked to be about as thick as a man's leg.

"Gorry!" Jared breathed. His instinctive movement brought another tug of his life lines at his helmet.

And right there the devil swooped down upon his conscience with devilish-

The gray shape whisked away—but it would come back, Jared knew.

CHAPTER III

SEA TRAP

JARED could not see just how big this brute might be back in its fastness; but he knew

ly rational argument. A fool Jared might well be for ever having gone down with improper deck service; but there was a limit to stark foolishness. Here was where a diver had to use his plain common sense, if he counted in tasting clean air again. Moreover, why should he pile a very serious danger on top of all the dangers that were being thrust upon him by those monkeys up above? What would those certified half-wits ever be able to do to help him out of trouble down here?

"So that finishes it for proper," he grated. "Damn an' slit my rubber if I'm goin' to reach under that thing's nose an' start a fight."

At no time had he ever been afraid to admit that he was afraid. Caution was a diver's common sense, and the hell if anybody cared to call it cowardice. What did anybody, up in his own element of air and sunshine, know about a moray in its own? Get into a fight an' get a hose line slashed. For what? Or worse, get maybe a hand bitten and bleeding in this water. It was diving history that a man, cutting his hand in shark water, had come up alive, but without his hand—and that man had had a real crew to help him.

Jared bent into the current again, backwards this time. His conscience was clear of all doubt, nor had he compromised with it. There was a decent limit to what a diver could be called upon to do.

Retracing his steps was like going down a steep hill, digging his heels hard in and leaning back into the weight that pushed him. The clouds of silver sand that he stirred rose waist high and trailed away before him.

Mind relieved of all doubt, he had time to think angrily of other things. He would have to find what snagged the lines now, somewhere there before him, and then he'd go right up. And that brought another thought.

"Must've been down plenty more'n half an hour. Those apes should ha signaled me long ago. An' didn't I try to make 'em understand that long submersion meant decompression trouble?"

Progress was slow. The current would have pushed him easily, but a man had to let those sand clouds clear from in front of him so he wouldn't blunder into things.

And then came the jerk at his helmet again—he always lashed his life line handily to the brass bars that protected his side window plate. His hand went up to find it. He could feel it stretching taut, not anywhere ahead or to the side, but behind him. He twisted around to look. He could see it, slanting upwards to some indistinct point on the coral cliffs he had just left. He felt his heart suddenly surge up to his throat. Tentatively he tugged at the lines.

"Snagged and *fouled*, by God!"

Instinctively he pushed his chin against the telephone spindle to buzz the deck. Then, with immediate memory of his plight, he stod stiffly still to think. Common sense, if a man didn't get rattled, cauld still pull him out of it. And then, what he wouldn't do to those gurry-heads by the—"

His fury of threatening choked off to a dry rattle. Looking upward, he was startled to see the moss-grown hulk of the yacht's bottom close over himself. He had left it a hundred yards behind him. It had moved, by God! Drifted over him with the current!

Blast that fool of a yacht skipper who couldn't even drop a kedge anchor that would hold in clean sand!

And then sheer fear banished his fury. The anchor had held. The stern cable, instead of trailing straight down aft of the hull, trailed away from the stern at a sharp angle, back to where the anchor held it.

Not the anchor. It was the cable that had slipped!

Slipped, or—The devil and money, they always went hand in hand. Yeah! Divers took their chances so that some people could make a lot of money.

He hadn't been afraid of those bandits pulling anything so crude as to cut life lines, not with so many witnesses around. But any sly murderer could let a cable quietly slip from around a big brass stern cleat. So that was how his life lines came to be trailing all over the sea bottom in loops, sure to get fouled with something!

A fouled line and no telephone com-

munication! No means of signaling! An inexpert crew who would know no way of devising any communication!

GRIMLY Jared turned and plowed his way back through the stiff current along the direction of his life line's slant. To the base of the massed coral formation it led him, and from there he could see it reach up and look around a jutting branch of coral above him, a good thirty feet or more above.

His breath came in a great exhalation of relief. That was not as bad as it might be. He could climb that coral cliff, though he would have to be excruciatingly careful of his bare hands on the sharp edges.

He worked his way slowly upwards. It was like climbing a cliff with brilliant colored shrubbery growing about it. Myriad painted polyp creatures, feeling the vibrations of his approach, snatched their waving tentacles in and closed tight. Jared grunted curses at them. Every one of them builded knife edges round their individual craters.

Then he stopped and cursed. He had come to a place where he could climb no farther. And almost at the top. It was a regular tree of coral that reached out a branch and caught his lines. Just out of reach. Easy enough to unloop, though, if he could but get at it.

A little cold tremor came to chill his stomach again. He clung where he was and studied the situation. So close to the glittering surface where sunlight and life were. But, for all the good that did him, he might just as well have been at the bottom, forty feet down.

Trapped! Air still came to him through the long trailing hose. Nothing so crude as cutting off the pumps with so many people to witness. He could feel the steady throb of the machinery all the way along, almost as clearly as though it came straight from the ship's hulk so close above him. But trapped all the same! Trapped by *accident!*

The escaped air bubbled merrily to the surface. So near. The other world where humans lived was only a few feet above his head. In his world a great blue-green parrot fish left its crunching of live coral and came to stare owlishly at the bubbles. A beak like that could crunch through armored hose line. Some larger marauding thing that Jared couldn't see frightened the parrot fish, and it was gone in a mad streak of color.

His rage boiled against the deck again. If there were any monkey in the whole outfit with the sense of a polyp he would notice the air bubbles breaking the surface in just one place all the time, not moving around, and, getting no signal from below, would come over to investigate. But that would call for intelligence, for rational thinking on the part of untrained people who knew nothing about what could happen under sea. And who was there on that ship who had that much sense? Or who would want to come and investigate?

Jared twisted round to glower hate at

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the dark bulk of the ship—and his growling mumbled away in his throat.

It looked as though somebody did have enough intelligence and intiative to investigate those bubbles. The little oval shape of the dinghy's under surface rocked violently, just as though somebody had jumped into it in a hurry. It pushed away from the hulk of the ship. Oar blades broke through the surface glitter. They pulled furiously. The dinghy's shape surged towards him. An anchor splashed through.

A gray shape drifted into view to investigate what had caused the anchor's splash. Jared cursed the relentless inquisitiveness of all sharks. But if he could but work his way around to the anchor now, he'd be able to signal with the anchor rope; and anybody who had sense enough to do this much would understand.

ANOTHER object came through the surface shine close beside the dinghy's oval. It was the round glass bottom of an observation bucket, a "water glass" such as craw fishermen use to spy their game.

Jared's heart warmed to it.

"Now there's sense," he admired. "There's a guy who's got real thinking. This fellow'll do something."

The fellow did. The dinghy's oval rocked violently. It pushed suddenly away, and the surface broke in a mighty splash and a great silver sprinkling of shattered glass as a shape dived through it.

The gray shape whisked away in afright. But Jared's stomach heaved up to his throat. He knew it would come cautiously back.

And then Jared's profane unbelief stuck in his throat. He could recognize the shape. Cal Benton, no other! And even in that second Jared could see a thin trail of blood from a cut on Cal's head clouding the water pink. He yelled a warning at it—shouted as though anything at all in all the world of humans could hear.

"Sharks!" he yelled. "You fool, and you bleeding!"

But there Cal was, as deaf to shouts as all the rest of the upper world. With short, clean strokes he swam down. It wasn't far. Deftly he untwisted the lines from the coral branch just out of Jared's reach. The lines fell clear. Cal kicked off. And there the gray shape loomed indistinct on its return trip of investigation!

Jared's breath stopped altogether. It was impossible even to yell any more. But he waved his arms wildly to attract attention. The gray shape saw the motion and drifted cautiously towards him. The brownish calloused things protruding from tough rubber didn't look so very edible. The shark flipped its lean overhung tail and turned to observe the other movement that was splashing at the surface.

Jared could see legs kicking beside the dinghy's oval. The shark saw them too. It flipped its tail mightily and torpedo-fast shot for them. The legs kicked spasmodically and disappeared out of the glass surface. The shark slid on under the dinghy.

Jared's breath let go in steam. "The blighted fool! Takin' a chance like that in this water. Without lookin'!"

The oar blades splashed through. The dinghy moved towards the ship.

Jared began his descent. Carefully, as he had come. He reached bottom. There he stood on wide braced legs, reviewing the incredible event. "He did it! Damn if I'd ha' believed it, but he did!"

He scowled at his trailing life lines, all clear now, at the coral cliff against which the tide raced. Not so far from that cursed gadget thing that had caused all the trouble. Jared scowled ferociously in its direction. His throaty growl buzzed in his helmet.

"Damned if I'll let him do better'n me! Nossir! No monkey is goin' do a job an' me fall down on mine."

HE STOOD before the gadget again. There the moray still wavered in the current, keeping devil's guard over it.

He felt two tentative tugs on his life line. There it was now, light-taut, as it should be. He growled at it.

"Yeah! *Now* you're all set for me to

come up, huh? Well—" Savagely he gave four answering tugs. "Now if they'll remember between 'em all that means hold everything." He turned to the poised moray. He scowled appraisingly at the thickly pulsating throat.

It would be a chance—an awful chance, but he was stuck with it. He couldn't go up without the gadget now. If he could manage to drive his knife into that mottled throat and pin it to the coral behind, he might escape with unbitten hands. With grim distaste, he untwisted the knife from its sheath and edged forward within lunging reach.

He liked to think of it as a lunge, though he knew that his best movement through the water would be no more than a thrust. And those things in their own element could be awfully fast. He would have to divert its attention from the coming knife.

His teeth grinned out, hard bitten. He lifted his left hand high and twiddled the fingers invitingly before the evilly opaque eyes. He could see them turn upwards. Then he drove the knife for the throat.

He felt the point grate into coral. He didn't know whether he had pierced flesh. But he leaned all his weight against the handle and held it fiercely so.

A vast swirling of water surrounded him. He could feel it pressing against his rubber suit distinct from the current. Thick green coils lashed about him, thicker than a man's leg. A monster the brute was. The coils threshed about his feet, lifting them. He shoved his head against the release valve spindle to let out air and give himself more weight. He could feel the water squeeze his suit tight all over his body.

But the knife held. It had gotten well into a crevice. Jared's grin panted through his teeth. He could hold on now, he knew. But he dared not. There was blood. Not his own. But blood.

Jared left his knife sticking. He dropped to his knees, groped through the whirling sand for the gadget, found it, lurched away from there. The current pushed him. He went with long strides, plunging from that place. Lean gray shapes began to drift down to investigate that blood.

Under the ships looming bulk Jared stopped at last to take breath. He had planned to tug for haul up and then tug four to hold everything and hang suspended for a period of decompression.

But he was in a hurry to get out of there. All the pent up horror of staying down for keeps crowded in on him to go quickly while he could. He would chance decompression. He was strong, and his time up on the cliff near the surface counteracted the time of submersion.

He was shoving against the current to gain the descent line that marked the spot directly under the ladder when his feet kicked into something hard. The sand cloud trailed away, and there was nothing other than a rifle. A new one, not rusty at all. The same rifle, in fact, that Cal Benton had held with which to control things on deck.

"I knew it," Jared snapped. "Monkey business."

He snatched up the gun and tugged sharply three times. His heart was in his throat again, wondering whether there would be any response.

But it came all right. The line tautened, his feet swung away from under him. His feet found the rungs of his monkey ladder and laboriously he climbed it and clumped over the rail.

CAL WAS there, dripping water, a handkerchief tied round his head where he had bled. Jared handed the gadget to him and he could see from Cal's eyes and lips that he yelled.

He was still yelling when Jared wrenched the helmet from his head and drew in great gulps of honest human-life air. Only Cal's yelling was a jabber of words. Jared could make head nor tail of them. He had some words of his own to say. He wagged a strong finger before Cal's nose and growled at him, gruff as ever in his life and as doggedly uncompromising.

"Listen, guy. Don't you ever take a chance like that again. Not for any gadget. Nor even for a diver. Cripes! Didn't I tell you about sharks an' sech?" Jared could get some of his talk now.

"They—they wanted to stop me. Dangerous, they said—Yes, they said sharks, but—but damm it, I could see your bubbles and—and I—"

"So it was monkey business." Jared broke into the flood. And what about this rifle? How come on the bottom?"

"Well, I thought that the ship was drifting, and I told the captain so. But he laughed at me."

Cal was coming down to solid speech and his indignation was mounting with it. "But I knew damn well it was moving, and I tried to hold the captain up with the gun to make him do something. But then Mr. Symms jumped me to take the gun away. And I knew, if they got it, they could hold you up when you came up with the gadget. So, as long as I could, I hung on. Till Mr. Symms socked me over the head. And then, if I couldn't hold the gun, I knew the best place would be overboard. I knew you could handle everything, once you were up."

It was all out in one breathless rush. But it was damningly concise and to the point. The owner and his skipper stood at the break of the deck aft and had no words to refute any of it.

Jared's hard lips broke in a yet harder grin, and suddenly he shouted to his gaping crew. "Hey, you apes! Get me outa this rig in a hurry. I got a job to do!"

He practically snatched himself out of his hampering rubber and filled his chest in huge anticipation. Soft-footed, on taut knees, he crept along the deck to where the pair stood.

"By God, I'm coming to help the job." Cal shouted suddenly.

Jared grinned over his shoulder at him. "Fair enough, an' good for you, guy. Not that I'm figurin' to need any help."

And true enough it was. Cal Benton was not actually of very much help, but he did get his poke or two in. And the job, when it was completed, was a very thorough one. The comfortable chairs were wrecked. The companionway door, where Mr. Symms had clung to it in his desperate dash to get down to shelter, was wrenched off its shiny brass hinges. Owner and his skipper were both going to be very sick for a long while.

Jared stretched his shoulders and grinned in complete satisfaction.

"And this," he told the relicts of his wrath, "was no accident. In fact, you bandits, I done it a'purpose."

It was not till all his gear was packed in his launch; not till they were away, heading into the sunset, with Cal Benton clutching his precious gadget in both hands, that Cal said hesitantly:

"I'm hoping, Mr.—I mean, Jared. I'd like to have the good opinion of a man like you. I'm hoping, almost, that you don't think so badly of me."

Jared scowled into the sun. He gave no opinion.

Cal tried again. "I mean it, honest. I wish you could approve of me, a little."

"Naw." Jared said, uncompromising to the last. "I don't. But you got makin's. Stick around with me, guy, an' you'll get tough enough so she won't marry you either."

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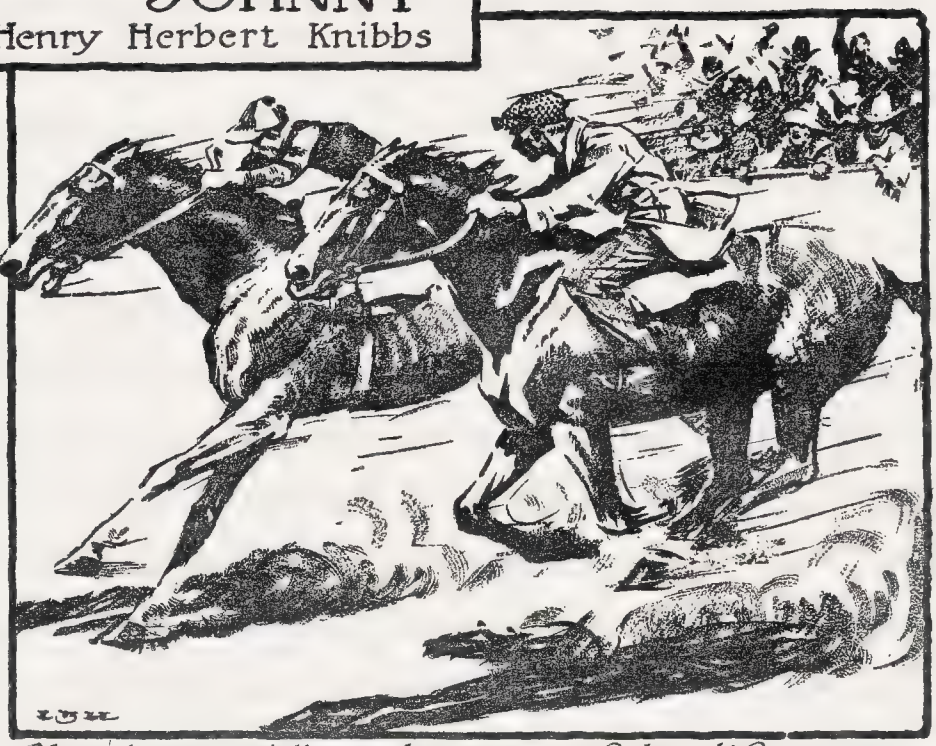
OVERCOAT JOHNNY

Henry Herbert Knibbs



Skood was riding the race of his life

IN A contest with a cornfield scarecrow, Skood would have won, hands down. His checkered cloth cap had a broken peak; his shoes turned up like sleigh runners. He wore an old gabardine overcoat. Winter or summer, he was never without the overcoat. What Eastern slum had disgorged him, nobody knew or cared. Known throughout the Southwest as Overcoat Johnny, this derelict of the race track had at least one redeeming quality. Drunk or sober, he never mistreated a horse.

The sporting fraternity of El Paso paid little attention to him as he shuffled into The Randall House bar. Skood, who had popped champagne corks with millionaire turfmen of both England and America, paid as little attention to them.

"Get to hell out of here," said the bartender. "Do you think this is a flop-house?"

"It would be, in a real town." Skood laid two bits on the bar. "I'm paying for my drink, you big stiff."

Down the bar, dark-eyed Young Joe Hardesty of Arizona grinned as Skood faced the bartender like a Bantam challenging a Plymouth Rock.

"Stay with it, Skood," said Young Hardesty. "Don't let him ride you into the fence."

The bartender glared. Nevertheless he produced the whiskey.

Skood took up his glass and shuffled round to his friend. "Didn't know you was in town, Joe. Come down to take in the big race?"

"Or get took in. How's Charley Price, and Peanut?"

"Both on their toes. I'm giving Peanut his work-outs," he added, his tone implying that it was a come down for a ten thousand dollar jockey to be exercising a hick town quarter horse. Skood glowered. "Why, I was buying magnums

when that rubber-bellied beer pump was drinking rainwater! When I was in England—"

"Sure! But this is El Paso. Have another drink."

Skood took his drink and made a fresh start. "When I put Searchlight under the wire for twenty thousand bucks, at the Gut—"

"Whose gut?"

Skood turned a mournful gaze on his friend. Even Joe wouldn't listen. Skood eyed the bottles back of the bar. Young Hardesty shook his head. "No more of that or you'll be rubbin' down Charley, thinkin' he's Peanut. Where's your next stop?"

"The barn," replied Skood. "Coming over?"

Notice you're still wearin' your lucky overcoat," said Young Hardesty, as they set out for Whiting's livery.

Skood aired his pet superstition. Aside from being his bed, his blanket, his buffer against weather, it was his fetish and his trade mark. Every bindle stiff from Chicago to Frisco knew that overcoat. Every race track on the Western circuit knew it. Not to mention the police.

Wouldn't take a thousand bucks for this old benny," declared Skood as they entered the livery barn.

Peanut's owner, a small man with quizzical eyebrows, a bald head and a youthful face, chatted with Young Joe about the coming races. The bronc riding contest, the chuck wagon race, the roping and the free for all mile merely furnished a setting for the real event. That, if anybody asked you, would be a race! Peanut was to run against the fast Dallas pony, Highpockets. Charley Price cautioned Young Joe not to go too heavy on Peanut. Highpockets was half thoroughbred, not quick as Peanut on the getaway, but a thunderbolt when he got into his stride.

Now if I was sitting on Peanut—" Skodd grumbled.

You're doing fine on that bale of hay," said Price.

Humped in his overcoat, Skood relapsed into mournful silence. The Dallas horse had trimmed everything in Texas at the quarter except Peanut, and Charley Price thought Peanut ran better for him than for any other rider. Skood shook his head. A brilliant jockey in his day, he still felt that he could get more out of a horse than any of these hicks. But what the hell! He wasn't riding Peanut. He was just cuffing him down and exercising him.

Skood got up, drew his overcoat together and asked Price for his stop watch.

They'll just naturally kill you if they catch you clocking Highpockets," said Price.

Skood shrugged in disgust. You're always figuring me a dead one."

HALF an hour later Skood was lying face down near the stretch where several Dallas sportsmen were watching Highpockets get a workout. Highpockets' owner, a tall white-eyed Texas in town clothes and a Stetson, spotted the old overcoat and decided to investigate. He found Skood inside the overcoat, apparently dead to the world.

"Overcoat Johnny," he said as he went back to the group. Drunk as a fiddler. Go ahead. Breeze Highpockets a quarter."

After they had left, Skood shuffled back to the livery barn.

"I got Highpockets for the quarter," he told Charley Price. "Honest, he's so fast I'm scared to tell you."

"Anybody up at the stretch?"

"No. The Moran boys are through."

"Reckon I'll turn Peanut around a couple of times," said Price. "Like to come along, Joe?"

On the flat east of the stable, Price warmed Peanut up and then turned him over to Skood, telling him to take him for a quarter, but not to push him. It was the first time Skood had been allowed to give Peanut a real try-out.

Still wearing his overcoat, Skood mounted.

"Shuck that damn overcoat," said Price.

Skood demurred. Even with the overcoat on he was ten pounds lighter than Price. Besides, if he took it off something was bound to happen. The pony would stumble and break a leg, or go sour and refuse to do his best.

"I been wearing this old benny and exercising him, right along," argued Skood. "It don't bother him any."

"But you never took him for a quarter before. All right. Give him plenty rein." Price glanced at his stop watch and let them go.

Peanut was halfway down the stretch when the overcoat, ballooned by the wind, spread and tore the bottom button off. A backward glimpse of those flapping wings that beat his sides sent Peanut to the finish like a jackrabbit ahead of a hound. He had turned the heat five seconds faster than ever before.

On the way back to the barn Skood begged Price to let him ride Peanut in the coming race. When it came to getting all there was out of a pony, Skood modestly admitted that there wasn't a jockey in America that could outride him.

Charley Price shook his head. There was no question about Skood's ability, when he was sober. But there was too much at stake to take any chances. Peanut was an El Paso horse. El Paso was backing him heavily. And the Dallas contingent was already offering odds of two to one.

"Any time I can't take Peanut under the wire ahead of the Dallas flyer, I'll quit," said Price. "That will be your chance."

THE race was scheduled for two o'clock, Thursday afternoon. Early Wednesday night, Price, who had been complaining of feeling under the weather, was taken with severe cramps. At midnight he was moved to the hospital, a mighty sick man. Ptomaine poisoning, the doctor said. It looked as if the big race would have to be called off.

That night, as they camped disconsolately in the barn, Skood asked Young Hardesty how much money he could raise.

"About fifty bucks."

"Cigarette money! I mean real mazuma."

Whiting's night man came with a lantern.

"My woman is took sick," stated the night man. "I'll be back in ten, fifteen minutes."

When the night man had gone, Skood said he was going over to the hospital and talk with Charley Price. He told Young Joe to keep his eye on the pony until he returned.

The old walnut clock in the livery office said one-thirty. On the desk stood a lantern, its light turned low. Skood had really intended to ask Price to let him ride Peanut. He knew that Price had planned to back his own pony, that Price's money was in the livery office safe.

In his palmy days Skood would no more have thought of breaking into a safe than he would have of pulling a race. And it was well known that Skood couldn't be bought. But now, down and out, a joke in an overcoat, he saw a chance to make a killing. To get on top once more—

He would ride Peanut himself, and make the people who were backing Highpockets sit up and take notice. Surmising that Price would never consent to this, Skood shuffled to the safe. Often he had watched Whiting work the combination. "Right five, back left to thirty, back to naught, then right to forty-two." It was easy.

There was five hundred dollars in a long manila envelope marked with Price's name. Skood told himself he wasn't stealing the money. Not on your life! He was simply borrowing it to invest for his boss. In the cash drawer was another packet of bills—Whiting's money. Skood's hands trembled above the bills. If the Dallas pony should beat Peanut it would be the pen, and hard labor. But what the hell! If a guy is going to hang he might as well take the whole rope. With shaking hands Skood stuffed all the money into his overcoat pocket.

Just before the night man returned, Skood went back to Young Joe.

"It's okay," said Skood, intimating that he had seen Price. "Charley says he wouldn't let Peanut run if his friends wasn't backing him so strong. Says he'd hate to disappoint 'em. What I mean, at two-thirty tomorrow afternoon, a fella by the name of Overcoat Johnny will be setting on Peanut, waiting for the flag."

A lantern between them, Skood

counted out a thousand dollars. Young Joe's suspicions were allayed when Skood told him it was Price's money.

"Here's the idea," Skood explained. "If I was to show up in the Randall House with this bunch of kale, I'd get pinched before I could tell 'em where I got it. Now the bunch knows that you're okay. Suppose you drift in about ten tomorrow morning, and pick up all the bets you can. The Dallas gang is laying two to one on Highpockets."

"I'll go you," said Young Hardesty. "But if there's anything crooked about this deal, I'm tellin' you the pen is a dam' cold hangout in winter."

"Well, I got me overcoat," laughed Skood. "Do you think I'd throw you for a measly thousand?"

RUMORS and drinks were passing back and forth across the Randall House bar. Charley Price was sick. The quarter mile dash had been called off.

About ten o'clock next morning Young Joe Hardesty strolled into the barroom. The race hadn't been called off. Peanut would run. Overcoat Johnny was to ride him. The news that Skood was to ride was a joke. Odds of two to one that Highpockets would win were not hard to get. Stipulating in each case that the bet be in cash, and that the proprietor of the Randall House bar should be the stakeholder, Young Hardesty bet the thousand in moderate amounts. The Dallas crowd thought he was a sucker, a kid cowhand with more money than brains. But many of the El Paso sports followed his lead, reasoning that Young Joe wasn't backing Peanut entirely through friendship for Charley Price.

In spite of Skood's assurance that Price had put up the money, Young Joe felt uneasy. He didn't think that Skood would throw him. Yet if there was anything crooked about the deal, Young Joe knew that he himself was implicated.

Returning to the stable about noon, he had even more reason to feel uneasy. Skood and the pony Peanut had disappeared. On Peanut's stall was pinned a note which read, "We'll be there." It was unsigned. Was Skood drunk? Or had Price sent word to him not to ride? Had Skood stolen the thousand? But there was no use worrying now. The money was placed. If the race was called off it would be returned. But if it was run, and Highpockets won the quarter—

Young Joe glanced up.

"Know where Skood is?" said Whiting. Behind him stood the night man.

Young Joe gestured toward the empty stall.

"Somebody," Whiting declared, "took a thousand dollars out of the safe, last night. It was there when I left, at six yesterday evening. Know anything about it?"

So that was where Skood got the money? There was trouble ahead. But Young Hardesty couldn't throw Skood down, even if the little bum had got him into a jackpot. "Don't know a dam' thing about it."

Whiting asked the night man if he had left the stable during the night. Riley confessed that he had stepped over to The Castle and taken a couple of drinks. He wasn't gone over ten minutes.

"Ten minutes was plenty. You're fired."

"But Mr. Whiting, I didn't touch that money!"

"You're fired!" Whiting turned to Joe. "Come on into the office a minute."

A fat man with an oily face sat in Whiting's swivel chair smoking a cigar.

"Know him?" said Whiting.

"Sure I know him! Pinched him once, when he was down here rammin' around with Tonto Charley. But the little son-of-a-gun got away."

"That was me," said Young Hardesty.

The El Paso detective asked Young Joe if he had taken the money. The answer was a terse negative. Did he know who had taken it? Young Joe didn't. The detective chuckled. Did Young Joe know where the money was? Young Joe thought he knew, but he didn't say so. Did he know where Skood was? Joe didn't, and his reply was convincing. The oily faced man chuckled. "Maybe you know where Charley Price's pony is. Seems he's lit out, also."

"Mebby he's in the hospital, in bed with Charley," said Young Joe. "Charley don't sleep easy unless Peanut is close around somewhere."

The detective glanced at Whiting and nodded. "That's all, Joe," said the liveryman. "But if you should happen to run into Skood, tell him he better show up at my office if he doesn't want to winter in stripes."

As Young Joe left, Whiting turned to the detective.

"If I didn't know Young Joe so well—" he began.

"You'd tell me to take him in. That would be a mistake. Joe didn't take that money. He's a tough kid, but he ain't no thief. And Riley didn't take it. He ain't got guts enough. That leaves Skood."

"Got anybody trailing him?"

"Ain't necessary," declared the detective. "I'll land him when he connects up with Young Joe."

Whiting nodded. According to report, Young Hardesty had backed Peanut to the extent of a thousand dollars. He had placed the money the morning following the robbery, a mighty suspicious circumstance. But, ordinarily tight-mouthed, if arrested he would give them as much information as a hitching post.

"I'll ask him to eat with me at the Randall House," said Whiting.

"Good idea! You'll find me over at the track."

YOUNG JOE accepted the invitation. After lunch they went into the bar and talked horses. The safe robbery seemed to have become a secondary consideration. Whiting said he didn't believe that Skood and Peanut would show up at the track. But if they did, the Dallas pony would run Peanut off his legs.

Young Joe's dark eyes grew serious. "If Skood shows up, give him a chance to ride. If Peanut loses—" He hesitated. "Anyhow, I'm takin' a dam' sight bigger chance than you are."

"And I'm taking you over to the track," said Whiting, who seemed to be in a jovial mood. "Got an idea I better keep my eye on you."

Young Joe grinned. "Hook up your buggy. I been stompin' around El Paso till my feet hurt."

In his palmy days Skood had jimmied his way out of too many tight pockets to be caught by a bunch of big hat constables. When, at eleven that morning, he rode Peanut out of Whiting's livery, he made for the sand hills. Circling the town, he pulled up at the back of the race track grandstand. He opened the rear gate, shuffled to the door in the back of the grandstand and led Peanut into a dim space studded with timbers and cross ties. Between twelve and one the crowd began to drift in, climbing to their seats, or standing around the bronc pens. Several cowboys were practicing roping. Skood could hear the murmur of voices, the trampling of feet. Dust drifted down through cracks in the flooring.

Skood hunched his shoulders, spoke a comforting word to Peanut. It was tough for the little pony to have to stand there in the dark. But he would be all the more lively when he hit daylight. Trouble might hang heavy over Skood's head, but he couldn't for a minute forget horses.

One little drink for a bracer. But no. Just before he went out to the line up for the quarter, he would shoot the whole works. By the time he got into the race he would be sitting on air. Hadn't he put Ironmaster under the wire for thirty thousand, on a pint of champagne and a couple of crackers? Overcoat Johnny, eh? Well, it was better to be a good old has-been than a never-was. What the hell!

Peanut sidled nervously as feet thundered on the flooring above. He could hear the grandstand buzz with question and comment when it was announced that Charley Price was sick in the hospital, that his pony wouldn't run.

A surge of disappointment swept over the crowd. Even the uninitated knew that the quarter mile dash was Dallas against El Paso, both towns backing their favorites to the limit.

Finally the announcer stated that, as Peanut was not going to run, the pony Highpockets, owned by Big Bill Moran of Dallas, would try to break the record for the quarter. The audience swallowed the sop and quieted down.

Sleek and glistening in the sunlight, Highpockets was led out. The grandstand vented its pent-up feelings in a cheer.

"I guess that's us," said Skood.

Round the end of the grandstand he came, his overcoat flapping about his legs. Peanut followed, indifferent to the noise. Skood saw Young Joe leap from Whiting's box and run toward him. At the same time Skood was aware of the approach of a fat, oily faced man in a big hat.

"Get movin'!" said Young Hardesty. "The Dallas pony is goin' to try for a record. You better make your talk right now."

"I'm listening," said the oily faced man. "Johnny, you're under arrest for robbing Bill Whiting's safe of one thousand dollars."

"Put 'em on," said Skood, thrusting out his lean wrists.

"Hell, no! Think I'm goin' to miss this race? Go ahead and run your pony. Don't you worry! I'll pick you up after the race."

SOMETHING was wrong. Silence fell upon the crowd. But when it was learned that Peanut was actually going to run, a roar went up that shook the grandstand.

Young Joe climbed back into Whiting's box.

"Hang onto your hat with both hands," said Joe. "There's a breeze comin' up."

Skood's lean mouth tightened as the crowd laughed. A jockey riding a race buttoned up in an overcoat!

"Take it off!" someone shouted. "Give that rabbit a chance!"

Skood's sharp gray eyes glowed with an unholy light, as he brought Peanut up to the scratch. They were laughing at him. But to hell with 'em! His job was to put Peanut under the wire ahead of the Dallas flyer, if only by a whisker. It was that or the pen.

Trained fine, Highpockets lunged and fought his rider. By contrast Peanut looked almost sedate. A few last-minute bets were made.

After two false starts, the flag dropped. The onlookers shouted as Peanut left the scratch a jump ahead of the Dallas pony. But that didn't worry Highpockets' backers. When he got into his stride he would leave the El Paso pony looking like a rocking chair on a veranda.

Peanut's ears flattened. He was a good two lengths ahead of Highpockets. Shoulders humped, the reins loose, Skood sat low. Peanut was simply flying. If he could hold it to the finish! Skood glanced under his arm. The Dallas pony had flattened out, was coming strong. He drew alongside with a reaching stride that ate up the track. Grimly Skood watched Highpockets' head push on past Peanut's shoulder.

The ponies were running nose and nose. Skood was riding the race of his life, yet inch by inch Highpockets drew ahead. His jockey grinned. With only half the distance still to go he had the race in his lap.

Skood leaned forward on Peanut's neck.

"You got to do it, baby!" he sobbed.

There was one chance—against countless possibilities. He knew what it meant. Skood stood in the stirrups. His gabardine overcoat snapped back, ballooned out like a sail. He gave a twist to his lean shoulders. The overcoat tore loose and floated to the ground.

In a wild surge of fright Peanut bored down the track, his legs twinkling like a bee's wings. The Dallas jockey swung his bat. But that gray streak, eyes glazed and neck out straight, closed up, drew alongside. With a splendid burst of speed Highpockets held him. The two ponies shot across the finish line apparently nose and nose. Neither jockey knew which horse had won.

A hush fell on the grandstand. Figuring that the Dallas pony had won, an El Paso man called out, "That race was a frame-up. Why wasn't it run so we-all could see the finish?"

A tall Texan hauled off and knocked the speaker out of his seat. "I'm from Dallas," he stated. "The race was run on the first quarter stretch because the rest of your dam' track is full of gopher holes." The Dallas man sat down.

The judge and several Dallas men, with Highpockets and his jockey, were coming back up the track. On its hind legs with excitement, the grandstand impatiently awaited the announcement of

the winner. The starter, the judge and the announcer conferred. The announcer held up his hand.

"The quarter mile dash—" he hesitated and glanced down the track, where Skood had dismounted and seemed to be examining one of Peanut's forelegs—"was won by Peanut, owned by Charley Price of El Paso, and ridden by—"

"Overcoat Johnny!" thundered the crowd.

A mass of people poured over the front of the grandstand, laughing, arguing, commenting on Skood and the flying overcoat. A momentary hero, Skood felt that his old fame and glory had returned.

As he hung the coat over his arm Skood saw a crowd gathering at the judge's stand. The judge was signaling to him to get a move on and fetch Peanut up.

"They're sure makin' a whole lot of hurrah up yonder," said one of the group accompanying Skood. "Looks like somethin' is wrong."

Skood's mouth twitched. The stimulus of excitement and liquor evaporated. His backbone was like a dish rag. Skood the victor became Overcoat Johnny the bum. Young Hardesty elbowed his way up to him.

"The Dallas bunch are makin' a protest," said Young Hardesty. "Claim that scarin' a horse by wavin' a slicker is a hell of a way to win a race. Seems the judge has reserved his decision till he talks it over with the racin' committee."

Skood looked sick. He handed Peanut's reins to Young Joe. "Take him and cool him out." In spite of his trepidation Skood ran a professional eye over the pony. Peanut was all of a lather. Peanut's blanket was hanging over a cross tie under the grandstand.

"Throw this on him," said Skood. With shaking hands he gave Young Joe the overcoat. "When you get time, take a look in the right hand pocket." And taking advantage of the jostling and excitement, Skood slipped through the crowd and disappeared.

WHITING and the oily faced detective stopped Young Joe as he was on his way out of the grounds with Peanut. They were looking for Skood.

"Skood," stated Whiting, "took a thousand dollars out of my safe, the night before the race."

Young Joe's face was expressionless. "I saw him back yonder, a spell ago. Reckon he's gone to lay down somewhere. He looked like his nerve was all shot."

"Got anything more to say?"

"Sure! Did you ever see a pony run like Peanut when Skood shucked his overcoat?"

Whiting and the detective decided that questioning wouldn't get anything more out of Young Joe, so they let him go.

Arriving at the barn, Young Hardesty put Peanut in his stall, rubbed him down and fed him. He hung Skood's overcoat on a peg in the harness room. Skood had said something about the right hand pocket. What Young Joe found was considerably more than a mere something. On the margin of the crumpled program was scrawled a series of numerals. Beneath them were the words, "Play safe."

Play safe! Dam' Skood, anyhow! He was always figuring out some scheme to beat the races, taking a list of the runners and juggling them around. But this was a list of figures. Mighty queer kind of race track bookmaking! As for playing safe, that was a joke. There was no sure bet in a horse race. Anything might happen. For instance, Peanut had won the quarter mile. And now the judge was withholding his decision. Young Joe whistled softly. As sure as hell Skood had stolen the thousand from the safe. He must have known the combination. "Right five. Left to thirty—" It was clear enough now. Skood expected him to put the thousand back.

Skood hid out in the sandhills until dark. Superstition rode him like a monster in a dream. Without his overcoat it was useless to try to buck the game any longer. In the chill starlight the low sand hummocks looked like graves. Skood shivered, was consumed by a fever of thirst that water could not touch.

Slinking back to town, Skood stepped into a saloon. After the third drink he decided to slip over to Whiting's stable

and get his overcoat. Then maybe his luck would change. Or was it too late?

He was in the alley back of the livery when someone touched his arm. "The game's up, Skood. Come on."

BILL DONOVAN, the oily faced detective, hustled him into Whiting's office. Whiting was there, and Young Joe Hardesty. That gave Skood a shock. So they had landed on Joe, had they? Well there was just one thing to do.

Young Joe gave him a warning glance, took a sheaf of bills from his pocket and handed it to Whiting. Skood did not know where the money came from, but it was almost an admission that Joe himself had taken the thousand.

"About that money," Skood began.

But Whiting was listening to Young Hardesty. "This here is two thousand I won on Peanut's whiskers."

Skood began to shake all over. Peanut must have been awarded the decision! But that still left Joe in a jam. Skood took a deep breath. "Joe didn't have a thing to do with it. I—"

Joe interrupted. "Mebby you could put it in your safe till I leave town."

"You bet I can!" Whiting opened the safe, swore softly. Price's envelope was there, and a sheaf of loose bills. The cash totaled one thousand dollars even.

The liveryman did some quick thinking. It looked as if Skood had tricked him, yes. But after all, the money had been returned.

"Some mistake," Whiting told the detective. "The money is all here. I guess you can turn Skood loose."

Skood couldn't believe that he was free, even when Donovan, savagely chewing his cigar, said with heavy sarcasm, "Some mistake!" and marched out.

"I borrowed the jack," said Skood. "Five hundred of yours and five hundred of Charley's. All Joe did was to place the bets. He thought it was Charley's money."

"Well, I guess that settles it." Whiting's tone implied the intimacy of conspiracy. "No use saying anything to Charley about this. You can give me my split, and put the rest of your winnings into your pocket. I'll tell Charley I put up the dough."

Skood felt disgusted. Whiting, who he had respected, had shown his hand. And it was crooked.

Skood started as that same hand was laid on his shoulder. "You thought old man Whiting was crooked, eh? Come out of it, Skood! You've got your feet crossed. Charley Price would have got his cut, no matter what you said."

"He sure would!" declared Young Hardesty.

"When you get 'em uncrossed," Whiting was saying, "we're going over to the Randall House. No. You won't need any cash. This is my party."

A grin spread over Skood's mournful face. Over at the Randall House the El Paso bunch would tell him what a keen ride he had made, how he had outsmarted the Dallas boys, and beaten the fastest quarter miler in Texas.

Skood wiped the grin from his face with the back of his hand. "All right. You're the boss. Wait a minute till I get my old benny. Looks like it's going to be a wet night."

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WHITE DEVIL

by Tom Roan

The bear···caught him···with one black-soled paw

TO ANY other living thing outside of Lemolo it would have been a wickedly bitter day. It was raw and freezing cold. A bleak north wind fish-tailed beneath a leaden sky, coming straight off the Artic Ocean in moaning and wailing gusts tearing down across the Bering Sea. Green seas between the mountainous floes whipped like writhing ghosts. Clouds of spray were shooting skyward, turning to slivers of frosty sleet that filled the air with flying needles of ice.

Only a polar bear could have enjoyed such weather, and out on the great floe Lemolo romped with her cub, diving and rediving into the choppy sea from a shaggy ledge. The fuzzy cub watched closely to learn his lessons in all detail, or took an occasional dive behind his mother to show his youthful eagerness to learn all there was to know about this business that would stand him well in the riotous fighting years that would be his lot in life.

There was real fun in it, and mother and cub were unaware of the danger approaching through the gloom. They did not see the rusty-brown shape slowly steaming northward in the teeth of the icy wind. They did not hear the rattle of crowbars and pick-axes as little brown men worked like beavers, chopping away the constantly gathering ice on the decks

and the rigging of the S. S. *Takahashi,* a squat-funneled Japanese steamer bound for a little low-handed business in these early spring waters.

The fuzzy one was Lemolo's first cub. It was born up there in a deep cave in the floe, the greatest and most amazing thing that had ever come into Lemolo's life, and for many days now she had been guarding and nursing it with savage jealousy. For it she would lay down her life willingly, and for it she would fight any monster of this frozen sea.

She knew nothing about a certain little gold-spectacled Captain Yoto Hashiroti and his most industrious crew of the *Takahashi.* That the little steamer had been in these waters before was of no concern to her. Neither was it of her concern that Captain Hashiroti had remarkable forethought and ability to keep clear of U. S. Coast Guard cutters that tried to police a great portion of this far-flung sea—a sea where poacher and near-pirate craft were always prowling, some to raid lonely little islands for seals, and some with an eye on the business of fishing where foreign craft were not supposed to fish.

ABROAD the *Takahashi,* Captain Hashiroti studied her through his powerful glasses. He saw a prize well worth the time and patience it might take to capture it. There was room for such a great bear and her cub in the forward hold, and the steel bulkheads and decks of that hold were powerful enough to hold a couple of bull elephants. In addition, he had plenty of time to spare, for he was a day ahead of his schedule—a schedule which would bring him off the Alaskan coast to a certain fishing trawler that would relieve him of ninety thousand dollars worth of Oriental narcotics.

Once aboard, the great bear and her cub would bring a handsome price in Tokyo, and along with those prized animals—if Lady Luck did not turn her back at the wrong moment—might go a number of choice sealskins that had happened to find their way into the hands of certain Japanese fishermen who made a business of plying these waters for anything that promised a fat fee.

The bear and her cub would at least pay something for this delay. Captain Hashiroti did not like delays. They were dangerous in these waters. He had been on time and within five hours' sailing time of the appointed meeting place when a coded message from the trawler's master had told him she would be exactly twenty-four hours late. There had been no other explanation, but Captain Hashiroti could guess that some government cutter had had something to do with it.

He put down his glasses. Five minutes later there were orders going back and forth on the *Takahashi.* Captain Hashiroti was going to capture a bear and a cub. He knew exactly how he was going to do it. . . .

LEMOLO climbed back on the floe after another long plunge into the sea, and looked up to see the steamer for the first time. Bells had clanged while she was under the surface of the choppy water. She had heard something down there, and now the intruder was at hand, a great hulk which crept slowly toward the floe as if feeling its way through the water.

She had seen ships. She had seen men. Both were things to dread. She snarled a warning to the cub. He was sitting there on his rump, the lessons in diving forgotten, his curious little black shoe-button eyes on this strange thing coming toward the floe. That one growl from his mother knocked all the curiosity out of him and sent him scampering across the ice to her.

Lemolo picked up the cub exactly as a woman would have cuddled a baby into her arms. The ship was still quite a distance away, but the great mother was taking no chances. She turned, the cub still cuddled to her yard-wide bosom, and started across the ice to make a beeline for the other side of the floe.

It was the beginning of a decidedly bitter game, where the fierce mother love of a bear and her instinctively cunning brain was to be pitted against the super intelligence of a man. Stripped of their weapons and placed on the floe or in the sea, all the men abroad the *Takahashi*

would have amounted to no more in a fight with her than a pile of dry leaves stirred to flight by a hurricane. But the men would not face her as she would have them face her. Lemolo knew that. She had seen them fight in the past. The strange things they would carry—things that looked no more harmful than a short limb of a tree—had a way of belching smoke and speaking in a voice as harsh as the smashing together of icebergs in a stormy sea. Whatever charged or fled from those strange noise-makers would stumble and go down long before the men came within range of her fighting paw—that paw which could knock a head from a shoulder or crush it into a pulp as easily as a sea gull's egg cracking on a rock.

She kept on, moving at an amazing pace for so large an animal. Her growls kept telling the cub that there was danger here, something for him to always remember to flee from, and like the already spoiled brat he had come to be, the cub started to wail, frightened beyond measure by this rusty-brown shape which had come steaming up out of the veils and clouds of spray.

The ship had already come to a halt at a safe distance from the submerged edge of the floe. That no sounds of shots came was a surprise to Lemolo. She heard the shriek of pulleys instead; looking back across her shoulder, she saw two boats being lowered from the port side of the ship.

She knew nothing of fast and powerful motorboats of the kind likely to be carried aboard a vessel in the shady business of poaching and smuggling. She had encountered canoes and kaiaks, such as the Eskimos and Indians used, and she knew that she could out-maneuver them if given half a chance, but when she heard the popping and sputtering of the motors and saw them start streaking through the water, she knew that she was up against a proposition no bear could very well handle.

She kept on, trying to increase her pace. The shots she had expected came in a little while. Metal things cried in the air to her right. Flying puffs of ice took shape. She snarled at them, hugged the terror-stricken cub tighter, and started bearing away to the left. It was her first mistake, but she did not realize it. In the direction she was going she would have come to the broadest part of the floe. In going to the left she was moving to the part of it that thinned away into a ragged needle, and, though she did not know it, the bullets were fired to drive her in that direction.

The motorboats swerved as she changed her course. Bullets now ripped the ice behind her with sickening slaps, hurrying her along. Before long she was humping and bounding along on the ragged needle of ice, with the open sea ahead of her and the motors of the boats popping like guns above the howling of the wind.

She came to the end of the ice, and turned as if to make a stand. The motorboats came on, spreading away from each other. One slowed to a halt. The other kept on as if giving up the chase entirely. It made a great half-circle, and came up on the opposite side of the ice from the halted boat.

Now the guns started crashing again. Jerky puffs of ice flew up in front of her, getting closer all the time. One was so close that she slapped at it. The cub let out a wail, and that stopped everything. Lemolo turned to the sea. She made one long leap with the cub clamped to her brawny bosom with only her left paw. The water opened. Her body cleaved down through the wind-whipped green, down and deep-down, powerful strokes carrying her as swiftly as a seal heading for a mating rendezvous. She was all grace down there, straightening out and heading toward a floe she had seen in the distance. A noise followed her, that incessant popping of motors now turning at full speed. She swam on and on, and then came curving up for air as she felt the cub struggling against her.

A growl came from her as she broke the surface of the water. She saw the boats. They were closing in on her. A man stood in the bow of each of them with a stout line coiled in his hands. She read the danger, snarled for the cub to take a deep breath, and again she was going down. When she came up one of the boats was almost on top of her. She

swept out a fierce paw as something shot through the wind and struck her in a tangling mass that went over her head and tightened like a coiling snake around her shoulders.

IT WAS a battle of battles. Captain Yoto Hashiroti had seen many bloody affairs in dives ashore and in madcap brawls at sea, but never anything to surpass the desperate determination of a polar bear fighting for herself and her cub.

Captain Hashiroti had a perfect view of it, from a spot of absolute safety. With his fur-lined collar lifted to break the wind and his gold-braided cap pulled low over his ears, he stood on the upper bridge of the *Takahashi*, and smiled his thin little smile. His wonderful glasses brought the fight almost to the tip of his little brown nose. Without a doubt it was excellent!

It was something a man would do well to remember to the last apparently little insignificant detail; it was something a man could look forward to relating to his grandchildren when he grew too old to pace the decks of a rust-eaten little steamer.

The lense of the glasses showed that the bear was really a fighter of fighters, a most splendid creature in action. She had become that the instant the first stout line closed around her massive shoulders.

One of the sailors struck her over the head with a boat hook. It was very foolish. Captain Hashiroti could not help smiling at the rank futility of it. The boat hook was snatched out of the seaman's hands and smashed into flying bits and splinters of wreckage with one swift paw-stroke. From the way the pieces flew the thing might have been no more than a stick of chalk suddenly sprayed with bullets from a machine gun.

It was no more than three seconds later before the man who had held the boat hook was dying. He went down, sprawling to the bottom of the pitching and lunging boat as if he had been a man-shaped bag of rubber inflated with air and suddenly slashed wide-open with a quick blow from a keen-edged sword. The bear had merely reached up and caught him on the back of the head with one black-soled forepaw that had snapped his neck like the breaking stem of a clay pipe.

But men were cheap, especially the kind of men who made it a point to sign aboard ships like the *Takahashi*. Captain Hashiroti did not even resent the unfortunate man's going. He sensed, instead, an immediate feeling of gain. A man-killer bear would be worth more than one that would submit to capture with no more fuss and squeal than a fettered pig going off to market. A man-killer bear would have a reputation—a selling point.

Other men might have been killed if the boat had not lunged away to one side by falling in a trough of the sea just before the second boat swung to the rescue. The man in its bow managed to cast the loop of his line around the fighting devil.

Some Anglo-Saxon would have described the rest of it as a sweet little hell all of its own—a lunging, splashing, snarling hell among the swiftly running graybeards of the sea. Two sailors managed to get their lines fastened securely to the cub as it broke away from the raging mother. Now the boats were swinging away from each other, keeping the mother bear between them in a net-work of lines.

Behind the mother, fighting like an old soldier who would rather die on the bloody field of battle than to hold up his hand to surrender, followed the cub, and with their motors racing at top speed the boats were heading back for the steamer.

The boatmen had their orders; they knew what to do and exactly how to do it. Everything aboard the *Takahashi* was ready for them. Booms on the forward deck had been lowered. Steel cables hung over the bow. The hatch cover of the forward hold had been removed, and the yawning dark pit was there, ready to receive its prisoners.

Yoto Hashiroti knew how to get things done. The motorboats came around the *Takahashi* from behind. They made a sweeping half-circle that carried them well forward of the bow of the ship, and

then swung straight toward it, slowing their speed as they approached. One boat kept to the port side of the high bow.

The other kept to the starboard until the fighting bear was brought up hard against the steel prow, to be held there helplessly while final arrangements were being completed to bring her aboard with the cables on the booms and the forward steam winches.

It took thirty minutes to get that lunging and slashing mother in the right position to swing her out of the sea. She came up still fighting, and fighting she was lowered away in the hold to drop into a raging bundle down there in the darkness.

It took less time for the cub, and far less effort. One of the lines had fouled and choked him into insensibility before they started to haul him out of the water. He came aboard in a helpless wad of fuzzy white, but there was a fixed snarl of defiance in his baby face to tell them that even in death he would not surrender.

They thought he was dead. He must have been very close to it. The motorboats had been slung aboard and lashed in their cradles, and the old *Takahashi* was again getting underway before the cub showed signs of returning life with a weak jerking of his feet and meaningless growls coming like whispers from his throat.

Captain Hashiroti had him dragged aft and lowered into an old chain locker before the little fellow was able to get up and fight.

Captain Hashiroti did not want to remove that forward hatch cover and again face that snarling white devil in the hold until she had had a little time for her temper to cool.

He ordered rounds of hot *saki* for all hands, and returned to the bridge, quite proud of himself. He had reasons to be. He never made a mistake. Mistakes were the outcome of stupidity, the lack of forethought.

Even as he sipped his own hot *saki* it never occurred to him that the most hideous mistake any man could make would be to separate a she-bear from her cub.

THERE was red hell afire in the forward hold. The mighty Lemolo raged. Choked by lines until she was hoarse, dripping blood from a dozen places where the lines had sawed through her heavy coat coat and rubbed raw the bare skin, she had no intention of giving up the fight. Had they lowered the cub into the hold with her and dropped down a tub of fish, she might have quieted herself in time, but the two-legged creatures had overlooked that possibility.

Somewhere in the swaying, tossing and rolling of the ship, somewhere in the noise of passing feet overhead and the vibrating noise of the engines, she could hear the cub crying in a weak, far-away voice. It might not have been the cub at all. The sounds might have come from the squeaking of blocks, but, whatever it was, it reminded her of the cub, how he had fought beside her, how he had cried out to her for protection when the battle was going sorely against him—and mother love and a sense of duty was as strong and loyal in Lemolo's heart as it could have possibly been in the heart of the fairest human mother that ever held a child to her bosom.

Some of the lines had been left on her. She tore them off, fought them there in the darkness, and pounded the steel bulkheads with blows that would have killed a horse. The crying kept coming to her, sometimes as if close at hand and just beyond the bulkheads, and sometimes far, far away. Only when the voice grew faint did she cease her charging about. She listened then. Once, during a long lull when there was no crying at all, she sat down in a corner and wept copiously, powerful paws held to her face.

It was getting to be smoking weather up there on the sea now. She could hear the green combers coming aboard, hear tons of salt water board the ship and crash on the steel deck with the noise of falling glass. The crying of the cub came back, and Lemolo's restlessness knew no bounds.

The storm grew worse steadily. The wind seemed to gather itself and come from all directions to center its worst blasts upon the little steamer. Green graybeards seemed to be boarding the

ship from every hand. At times they drowned out all hint of the crying sounds that came to Lemolo. A fiercely whistling and bawling wind took their place. Not many masters would have cared to have their ships out in weather like this.

Had Lemolo and her cub been free she would have sought a sheltered spot high above the sea in the crotch of some giant iceberg. Down here in the darkness she could only rage and spank the bulkheads with ringing blows that rivaled the fury of the boarding seas.

Life lines had been stretched on deck, and the *Takahashi* had run out of danger of bergs and floes. She was now in open water with a full twelve miles of sea room all around her. It was an excellent place for a smuggler to ride and wallow out a storm.

Green seas were still coming aboard with cascading thunderclaps. The *Takahashi* was about to start pumping oil through her water closets and heave to on the starboard quarter, keeping her engines idling at just enough speed to keep the racing seas from wrecking her propellers.

In such a position a ship could ride through almost any gale. The oil would keep the seas from breaking, and she would be dry on deck. No man aboard the Takahashi had ever been through such a storm in the Bering.

But Lemolo knew nothing about that, and cared less. She knew there was a storm raging, but she was a half-sister of stormy weather, fully capable of taking care of herself anywhere. She could feel the ship heaving, lunging and falling away in the troughs of the sea. She could feel it standing on its nose at one minute and on its tail at the next. It did not throw her off-balance. She had ridden too many swaying and lunging cakes of ice in the past to even be excited about it.

She had discovered something in her prowling about in the darkness and pounding the bulkheads. She had found the steel rungs of a ladder running up the bulkhead to the hatch cover. Investigation had followed. She had gone up the ladder, and had nosed and sniffed at the hatch cover, hoping to find a way out of this place. She had tried the stout three-inch planks overhead by pushing her paw against them; she had smelled, snorted and growled, and at last had come down to start banging the bulkheads again.

The ladder called her to it dozens of times. She had given it up in disgust, when the *Takahashi* swung around to the wind and something came crashing down on deck with the noise of a cannon exploding. A ragged splash of light took shape.

Sea water showered down on Lemolo, and it did not take a second glance to tell her that some heavy object had fallen up there to shatter a hole in that infernal thing that kept her from going to her cub.

THEY saw her coming. Captain Hashiroti looked down from his place of highness on the bridge and saw her. With a hole through the heavy planks above the rungs of the bulkhead ladder, she was like a white explosion taking shape. Splintered planks and the wreckage of planks flew in all directions.

She was like a whirlwind starting in the bottom of a straw pile and coming out the top of it.

A falling boom had brought about the first wreckage. It had landed tip-on, smashed two of the planks, split the canvas cover of the hatch and had ripped loose a steel stay. The bear was coming out of there, and every rifle was locked up.

Now Captain Hashiroti could picture his mistake. Had the cub been placed down there with its lordly mother, that mother would have made a bee-line for the rail with the cub in her arms. There would have been no more disaster to it than a wrecked hatch cover and a bear and a cub escaping, each far more willing to forget and flee than to continue the fight.

Yells and shouts made Captain Hashiroti quit thinking about his mistake. He saw the bear side-swipe a sailor with a paw-stroke the moment she came on deck.

The sailor went up in the air, described a perfect half-circle, and came down, head-on, against the capstan. An

enormous sea boarded the ship a second later. It swirled around the bear almost to her shoulders. Captain Hashiroti felt certain that she would be carried overboard.

The bear stood her ground. Only the sailor down against the capstan moved. The slopping sea water picked him up like a cork in a kettle of boiling soapsuds. It balanced him, spun him around, tossed him up and down, held him there as if rocking him in a cradle in the light of the deck bulbs.

The *Takahashi* rolled drunkenly. The water spouted, and took a flying lunge. The sailor and the water went over the rail, clearing it neatly, and that was the last of the sailor.

Everybody else was looking out for himself. Men leaped like panic-stricken monkeys for anything at hand. Like scurrying ants men were scooting up ladders and stays or diving like snarling cats for the forecastle. The fiddler was about to play, and nobody was willing to stand and call the tune.

Nobody wanted anything to do with that bear. She did not belong here, had no business here.

Even the little captain up there on the bridge was frozen in his tracks. He was capable enough when it came to bowing and smiling and apologizing his way through quizzing boards of U. S. Coast Guard officers, but a man could not convey his extreme regrets to a snarling polar bear looking for her fuzzy-faced cub.

She headed for the bridge. Captain Hashiroti entertained the somewhat foolish notion that he was safe there behind the heavy panes of glass. The man at the wheel was thoughtful enough to switch off the compass lights. It had been really dark on the bridge in the first place, but it had not been too dark for that infernal bear to see that there was somebody up there smoking a cigar. Before a cat could lick its whiskers she was at hand.

The heavy panes of glass shattered as if struck with a shell from a three-inch field gun. Glass flew all over Captain Hashiroti. It flew in the face of the man at the wheel. It cut a man behind the helmsman, splitting his cheek wide open with a flying sliver. There was a unison of belly-bursting yells. The helmsman left the wheel as if it had become blazing hot. Captain Hashiroti paused longe enough to throw his cigar into the bear's face. When he turned around he found himself alone except for the snarling monster.

Captain Hashiroti forgot the wheel and all the rules of the sea. He turned just in time to have the back of his heavy coat ripped out with the claws of a paw-stroke. He stumbled. He fell through the doorway, reached the head of a companionway, let all holds loose, and started rolling. The bear followed him. He brought up on the deck below with a bump along the side of the head that mercifully rendered him unconscious to his surroundings for the time being.

The bear smelled of her downed foe, rolled him over, poked her muzzle to his ear. She might have taken a bite out of his neck if the second mate had not appeared with a .38 caliber revolver. He fired it at close range. Its bullet raked her a scratch across the shoulder, and the next instant the second mate had been slapped into Kingdom Come to land in the starboard runway.

BY THIS time the ship was catching it. It had fallen off in a trough of the sea and was turning broadside to the wind. The oil was not yet being pumped. Nobody down in the engine room could possibly know what was happening. Nobody could see anything down there, and the engine room telegraphs were silent, still showing Full Speed Ahead on the dials—and a bear was up there playing havoc with everything that tried to stand in front of her.

She was anywhere and everywhere, prowling, smashing, clawing. She went up to the captain's cabin and literally took that apart. She tore the bed to rags, smashed the chairs, splintered a chest, and tore out the windows and doors.

There was no way of telling what she was going to do next. Only the foolish tried to face her. She slapped them aside like paper bags tossed in the wind.

She was invested with the spirit of all the devils of the earth and the sky.

As though the sea itself were in partnership with her, tons of water poured into the forward hold. Two oil barrels broke loose from the forecastle head. They came tearing down the port runway, carried along by countless tons of sea water and smashing everything to bits.

One caught a sailor between the cabin and the rail, and smashed his right leg into a ragged pulp. The rushing water behind the barrels did the rest. It picked up the man as the *Takahashi* heeled down to port, and flung him over the rail as if he had been no more than a bag of straw.

For more than an hour it lasted. Men chattered like gibbering apes in the rigging and wailed curses at their ancestors. The wreckage kept piling up, and the *Takahashi* kept right on steaming at Full Speed Ahead through the boiling sea, a reeling, rocking, swaying and plunging hulk, drenched and redrenched by the countless tons of water boarding her rails.

Captain Hashiroti had roused somewhat from his unconsciousness and managed to crawl through a doorway like a water-logged drunk dragging home in a cloudburst. He had found a quiet, dark place under one of the bunks in the second engineer's cabin, and had crowded himself as far back in the darkness as he could get.

Mr. Ishiwa, the first mate, was about the only one aboard blessed with what he considered a brilliant idea born in a moment of desperate necessity to do something.

He saw the raging mother bear coming aft along the starboard runway just after she had slapped another sailor into unconsciousness. His idea was one that proved almost a disastrous one, though it did help matters in the end. Mr. Ishiwa was close to the old chain locker. He flung open its cover, and released the fuzzy-faced cub.

The cub was right there near the top of the locker in a bundle of rusty chains. It took only a jump for him to come bounding out on the swaying and slopping deck. He was a little fellow, but he was all fire-ball and willing to fight, now that he and his big mamma had been forced into this thing. He let out a wail, slapped the seat off of Mr. Ishiwa's trousers, and started right in to show how even a polar cub could help his mamma box two-legged creatures about.

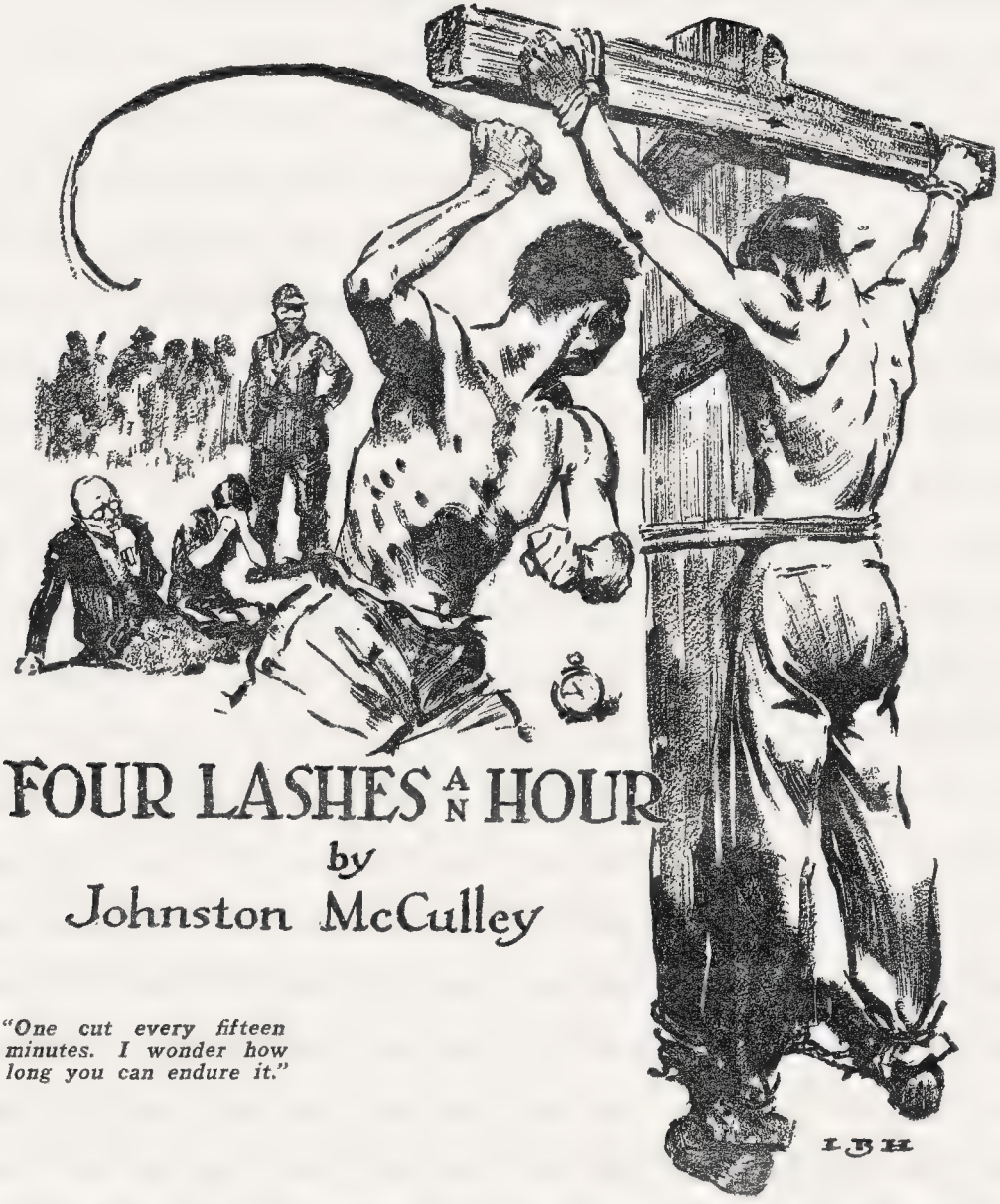
Mr. Ishiwa started to run. His thoughts did not function as they should have. He looked up, and saw the mother bear right atop of him and no way in the world for him to escape. It was death looking him in the eye. He was sure of it.

He let out a wail as the big bear pushed him down with her belly, ran over him as if he was not even worth striking, and caught up her cub.

Mr. Ishiwa would never live long enough to forget the blazing look that great bear turned on him, standing there with her cub in her arms. She seemed to ponder for a split-second whether to kill him or let him live, and it seemed that she decided on the latter. He saw her turn. She made one magnificent leap, and cleared the rail. Mr. Ishiwa staggered unhurt to his feet. He had just time to wipe a limp hand across his dazed brow when the *Takahashi* struck something with a rending and grinding sound that shook the ship from end to end and threw him flat on his back on deck.

LEMOLO looked back over her shoulder as the crash came. She was cleaving through the water with long, easy strokes. The happy cub was on her back with his arms around her neck. Ahead of them there were many floes and bergs, safe places to go at last.

The *Takahashi* was in a bad way. At least one little episode of smuggling and poaching had been spoiled for her. Lemolo swam on, not even interested in ships and the kind of men who sailed some of them. The raging seas were her playground, and she was home at last.



FOUR LASHES AN HOUR

by

Johnston McCulley

"One cut every fifteen minutes. I wonder how long you can endure it."

BAYTON had been bound to a twelve-by-twelve post set firmly in the hard ground. The post had a cross piece about eight inches above Bayton's head. Bayton's outstretched arms were bound to the cross piece at the wrists with leather thongs, so tightly that blood circulation was impaired and already his fingers were growing numb. More thongs held him closely against the post at the waist. His ankles were tied to the post also, but so he could brace his feet about eighteen inches apart.

Bayton was naked down to his waist. They had stripped his heavy shirt off him roughly, for Bayton had put up a fight. He had hoped that the fight would result in his quick and merciful death. But perhaps they had guessed that, for death had been denied him. They had taken punishment from his fists and feet, but they had not injured him in return beyond a little necessary battering.

Bayton could move his head to either side of the post far enough to look beyond it. He could see where the others

had been compelled to sit on the ground about twenty feet in front of him. That was to be an exquisite point of this torture: they would suffer as they watched him suffering, and he would suffer to see the agony in their faces.

He braced his feet and opened his eyes. Doc Moore was sitting there, staring at him. Doc was slight in stature, nervous in manner, stoop-shouldered, and squinted through thick eye glasses. A weakling physically, but fire and courage and firm conviction inside. But that had availed him nothing. Doc was here in the hands of Chung, and the dispensary at the mission was only ashes.

Lucy Adkins sat beside Doc, her face white but otherwise inscrutable. She was a rather pretty girl, twenty-eight, tall and lithe and with strength in her body. She was a practical nurse who had been working at the mission with Doc, serving dregs of humanity regardless of race or politics. But here she was, a prisoner of Chang.

Chang's bandits were scattered in the background, eating food they had stolen from the plundered mission and gambling for bits of finery they had found. And walking slowly toward the post came Change himself.

CHANG was no ordinary human clod elevated to a position of power through chance. He came of a good family, and had been educated in England. Political moves had ruined the fortunes of his family. So he had cast aside his real name and lineage and had become merely Chang.

From an enemy, he had stolen enough to equip a few followers, and had taken to the hills. Recruits had flocked to him, for there was always loot where Chang led his men on audacious raids. And he was a torturing fiend who had a refinement of method that made his tortures doubly fiendish.

Bayton saw with surprise that Chang was carrying an alarm clock, which no doubt he had taken from the burning mission. He put the clock down on a rock a short distance in front of Bayton. Then he stepped closer.

Chang spoke in a well-modulated voice, using precise English:

"You are Phil Bayton, the famous traveler and writer of books. I have been told that you are the unusual combination of brains and brawn. That point has interested me. It has always been my contention that the greater the intelligence of a man the greater his imagination and mental suffering under stress. The ignorant brute can endure greater physical pain than the man who had become supersensitive through developed mentality."

Bayton drew himself up. He was six feet and some inches tall, built like a giant, with great strength.

"Let's cut it short, Chang," Bayton suggested. "You're going to experiment to see whether my mentality can stand up under torture to my physically fit body—is that it?"

"How quickly you grasp things," Chang said.

"How are you going about the experiment?"

"The whip on your back, Mr. Bayton, but not in the usual manner. One cut of the lash every fifteen minutes, by this clock you see before you. Four lashes an hour. I wonder how long you can endure it."

"An interesting experiment," Bayton said.

"After each blow, my executioner will demand your name, and you will answer him. The answer will inform us you still have command over your mind and body. To give you an incentive—as long as you are able to answer, these two friends of yours, Dr. Moore and the lady, will be unharmed. However, when you reach the point where you no longer are able to give your name—But I am sure it is unnecessary for me to go into details."

"Quite unnecessary," Bayton replied. "The cruelties and injustices of Chang are well known, and he can't be expected to act like a human being toward prisoners."

Chang smiled slightly. "If it is in your mind that insults will enrage me and cause me to order your death, you may put such thoughts aside. I read the book you published two years ago,

in which one chapter was devoted to me. You made me out quite a monster. It would be unkind of me not to live up to that estimation. I would not make you out a liar."

"I'm quite sure you'll not," Bayton replied.

Chang smiled and gestured. A giant of a man stepped forward. He wore only tattered cotton breeches and straw sandals. His naked torso glistened with sweat. The whip he held was a knout, of the sort used in the days of the tsars.

Bayton braced himself as the executioner took up a position behind him and a little to one side. As the knout swished through the air, Bayton suddenly relaxed. The force of the blow was broken, but it was strong enough to bring blood and raise a welt.

"What is name?" the executioner demanded.

"Phil Bayton, you offspring of a sow!"

The executioner glared at the insult, but tossed the knout on the ground and sat down cross-legged in front of the clock. Doc Moore's face had turned white. Lucy Adkins had closer her eyes and swayed slightly against the doctor.

"Four lashes an hour, at intervals of exactly fifteen minutes," Chang said. "That is all. You may watch the clock yourself to see there is no cheating. A strong man should endure such a thing for a long time, you think? Fifteen minutes should give him ample time to recuperate from a blow and give him strength to endure the next? We shall see."

IT started in mid-afternoon. It was not so bad at first. Bayton recuperated between blows. But now his arms were numb and his legs seemed like lead. He found that the actual pain of the blows did not distress him as much as the anticipation of them. The cruelty was mental more than physical.

Doc Moore and Lucy Adkins remained where they were sitting. Chang sent them food in the evening. The executioner gave Bayton a gulp of stagnant water. Chang was away somewhere, knowing Bayton would not break so early. In the background, the bandits still crouched around their cooking fires.

Sunset painted the rocky hills, and the dusk came. The executioner put a shielded candle on the ground so the dial of the clock would be illuminated. Bayton began fighting himself to keep from watching the clock.

At the end of each fifteen-minute period, the executioner got up, stretched his arms and legs, picked up the knout and took position. The lash fell across Bayton's back, which was becoming a mass of welts from which blood oozed.

"What is name?"

"Phil Bayton, scum!"

Stars and moon wheeled the sky. Leaning against each other, Doc Moore and Lucy Adkins slept the sleep of exhaustion. Bayton dozed at times against the post, to be awakened by the sting of the lash and a voice demanding his name.

Dawn came stealing over the hills, then the merciless sun blazed down. Swirls of mist rose from the rocks. Yawning, Chang approached.

"You endure the ordeal remarkably well," Chang said. "For the sake of your friends, I hope you remain conscious a long time."

The hours passed. Bayton found it impossible to keep from watching the clock. His anticipation of the blows caused him mental suffering. He watched the hands of the clock getting closer and closer to the moment—

Swish . . . thud!

"What is name?"

"Phil Bayton."

Doc Moore and the girl were fed again, and again the executioner gave Bayton a gulp of water. The blazing sun broiled his lacerated back. He told himself he must hang on, must always be able to answer with his name.

Bayton knew something Chang did not know, that a detachment of Chinese regulars were approaching the mission. The soldiers would make short work of Chang and his men if they could make a surprise attack. He must hold on until the troops came. Perhaps Chang would not be able to destroy his prisoners in the last moment.

Mere physical punishment would take

a long time to break him down. But mental agony might do it sooner. He watched the clock. Five minutes or so before time for a blow, he began feeling the lash across his back. His body crawled, twitched. He anticipated the cut, the sting, wondered whether this time it would fall high across his shoulders or nearer the waist.

The thing for an intelligent man to do, since he could not prevent his mind working, was to compel it to serve him, guide it into proper channels. He could think of other things, could carry himself away from his predicament, from this scene, on the wings of memory. He could make his mind so active with memories that it would not take cognizance of what was happening to his body here and now.

He cast about in his mind for some topic which would be engrossing, and found it readily. There came now to Phil Bayton the thought which has come to thousands of men facing an extremity:

How came I here?

By what strange trail of circumstances had Phil Bayton arrived at this post in China, a prisoner of a bandit, suffering the ignominy of the lash? What had started him on the long journey which had brought him to this end?

He closed his eyes, and his mind went back. . . .

BEAUTIFUL, alive, vibrant Sue Fielding had been all of those. Bayton had fallen in love with her at college. There had been a night on the campus when he had held her against him tightly, fiercely, as if he never would let her go. Their lips had met and clung.

When commencement came, Bayton had made no definite decision regarding his future life. Sue Fielding seemed puzzled that he should have both brain and brawn in predominating quantities. She admired him as an athlete, as a woman always admires a strong man who gives her a sense of protection. But she admired his mental qualities more.

The few little things he had written in his senior year, which he had sold to magazines—how proud she had been of them! He would become a famous writer, she declared. He must concentrate on his work, let nothing interfere. She would wait. When success came, and it was possible economically so she would not be a burden to him, they would be married.

So Phil Bayton had started his battle against the world. He had a measure of success at first, for his work was bright and fresh. Then it grew stale.

"You're not doing the thing you want to do, Bayton," an editor told him.

"Writing is what I want to do."

"But you're not writing what you want to write. You're writing what you think will sell immediately, not what you actually want to put on paper. There's no enthusiasm, no fire in your stuff. If you ever hear the far-off places calling to you—"

"That's it! They're always calling."

He got his chance within a month, to go with an exploring party. In a burst of enthusiasm, he told Sue Fielding about it. She took the news coldly, refused to meet him half way in his ambitions.

"With your fine mind, you want to be a common adventurer," she accused. "That's the brawn in you fighting and overcoming the brain."

So they quarreled, and she gave him back his ring. It was a pity, for the expedition he was to have joined was postponed. But the far places still called to him, and now he did not have the anchor of a fiancée to hold him.

Swish . . . thud!
"What is name?"
"Phil Bayton."

FOR the first time in his life, he got drunk on the boat going over. He never was quite sure how he got to Marseilles. But there he roamed alone at night in the wrong part of town. There was a fight in a narrow street, with knives flashing in the fitful light and Bayton, with his back against a wall, defending his life and what money he had on his person.

"Stand to'm, matey!" a squeaky voice called.

Out of the night dashed a strange man to stand beside him and fight with him, a much smaller man who seemed to know the rules of this sort of combat. It ended with one of his attackers on the ground with a knife in his breast, others scurrying like rats to their dark holes, and Bayton's unknown benefactor clutching his arm and whispering for him to hurry, that the *gendarmes* were coming on the run.

Then, flight through the narrow, evil-odored streets, and escape. Tommy Delch—that was his name—giving directions and advice. Gasping, panting, they reached a hole where the air stank, where men moved furtively through the shadows, but where Tommy Delch declared they were safe.

"You did for'm proper, matey," Tommy Delch whispered, as they drank thin sour wine. "Took his own knife away from'm and used it on'm. A man with your size and strength—they could use you where I'm goin'."

"Where are you going?" Bayton asked.

"I'm joinin' the Legion, matey, no less. There's somethin' behind me in Lunnon . . . but never mind that. The Foreign Legion, matey. 'Tis a haven and a refuge—"

"Why not?" Bayton said. He joined the Legion with him.

At Sidi-bel-Abbes, he towered above the other recruits and soon attracted the unwelcome attention of the non-coms. Such a giant of a man who carried himself as if he thought he was the equal of any might have ideas regarding his importance, they thought.

But they had difficulty "whittling down" Bayton. He endured their petty cruelties, fought when fight was forced on him, and won respect. Only one, a certain Sergeant Krontz, remained vindictive.

Drill . . . full packs under a broiling sun . . . extra duty for every slight infraction of rules . . . recreation hours spent in swilling thin wine in native dives . . . trouble about passes . . . up in front of caustic Captian Foulard for a lecture . . . Algiers . . . a certain langorous beauty at whom Phil Bayton laughed and turned aside—because he could not get the memory of Sue Fielding out of his mind.

Into the desert country . . . the monotony of life in a post around which the wind-shifted sand hissed like a thousand serpents . . . drill . . . Sergeant Krontz' enduring enmity . . . death always lurking behind the next sand dune.

Then the reconnaissance march which started at midnight . . . plod, plod, plod! . . . a blazing sun . . . a gun exploding behind a rock!

The parched earth seemed to vomit the Beni Ulad. They swept down to complete the ambush with a massacre. Legionnaires tossed up their arms and dropped. Shots echoed from the crags and bullets sang as they ricocheted. A machine-gun stuttered. Bayton was at the gun. His comrades were strewn around him, some with eyes glazed and others moaning and cursing. A face-blackened wounded man crawled to him —Sergeant Krontz.

"You are a dog, Bayton, but a fighting dog. Relief column on the way . ."

"When we get out of this, Krontz, I'll remember you called me a dog."

Back at the post again, the sorry remnant of them, licking their wounds. Whispers passing among the men. Tommy Delch holding Bayton's hand and dying with a grin on his face. Then a bright moonlight night when the officers obligingly remained in quarters or turned their backs. Bayton and Krontz beside the wall, the latter without insignia of rank, and men of the battalion gathered around them. . . . Veterans talk yet of that battle, and call it the an hour before Krontz finally went down to stay down, and Bayton reeled aside and collapsed.

Things were easier after that. Bayton got his corporal's stripes when they went back to Algiers. He and Sergeant Krontz became friends. Afterward, he made much of Krontz in the book he wrote when he got out of the Legion, the book which made such a furor and established Phil Bayton in the literary world. He wondered if Sue Fielding had read it. . . .

Swish . . . thud!
"What is name?"
"Phil Bayton, you scavenger dog!"

. . . . A TUMBLED desert waste, then a jungle almost impenetrable. Abode of reptilian life, fauna that seemed of another world, a climate which changed the natures of men and even their modes of thought.

Bayton had no difficulty connecting himself with the expedition searching for Mayan ruins and intending to study Mayan customs and culture. Irascible Dr. Burnsten, the scientific head of the expedition, accepted him instantly. Bayton had brains, endurance, strength which would prove of value in emergency.

But Dr. Burnsten's seemingly ridiculous discipline irked him. It was a childish discipline based on innumerable petty rules, not the strong discipline of the Legion.

The latter made men and welded them together, whereas Dr. Burnsten's sort of discipline caused them to grow peevish and dissatisfied and wrecked morale.

Bayton rebelled without showing it. He broke away one Sunday afternoon alone, saying he was going hunting. He penetrated the jungle in a direction none of the expedition had gone. In an hour he was lost.

The jungle pressed down, enveloped, smothered. The silence hammered at his ear drums, was broken only by a sibilant whispering Bayton could not translate. He fought the tangled growth, stumbled on. Fear came to him for the first time in his life.

But he controlled himself. He tried to was nothing which would burn.

He fired his revolver once, strained his ears listening for a reply which did not come, then decided to save his remaining cartridges.

He wandered until he struck a sluggish, crooked river into which the jungle dipped its branches on either side. The water was reddish, with slimy green streaks in places. Bayton followed the river.

On he staggered through the jungle, perspiration bathing his body, his boots sinking into the ooze. For two days and nights he traveled, following the sluggish stream. Gradually he came to higher ground, and the vegetation changed, and the air was not so charged with odors of fetid jungle growth. Then he reached a clearing, sprawled thankfully beside a pool of clean, cool water and drank. rolled over and slept dreamlessly.

HE was prodded awake, to find a score of natives around him. They were tall, with intelligent faces, wore garments of skins and feathers which seemed to follow a fashion.

Bayton got to his feet and stretched his limbs. The attitude of the natives was not hostile. One, who seemed to be their leader, bowed before him, spoke in a tongue Bayton did not understand. Bayton bowed in return, then held his head high. Two men brought food forward, well-roasted flesh, and Bayton ate thankfully. The leader spoke, and a garment was put over Bayton's shoulders—a magnificent cape of gorgeous bird feathers.

They indicated he was to go with them. They followed a curving path through the jungle growth, making for higher ground. Sentinels were stationed along the path. Through a narrow pass they went, and suddenly Bayton looked down upon a small blue lake surrounded by high rock walls. On the shore of the lake was a city built of rock, with a magnificent building at one end, which had the aspect of a temple or ruler's palace.

Bayton inspected the tribesmen as they entered the city. They were intelligent-appearing, well dressed after their manner. Their habitations followed a decent architectural design. The utensils he saw were serviceable. not makeshift. There were signs of a civilization and culture.

Bayton was taken to the big building, and ascended a flight of stone steps to a wide portal where six magnificent specimens of the tribesmen stood on guard. There was a long wait in a large hall. Another robe, more magnificent than the first, was draped over Bayton's shoulders.

They took him to a large room where men and women stood ten deep around the walls. The women were dressed in clinging robes. They were tall, straight,

and looked at him with lively interest.

A command rang out, and those in the room prostrated themselves. Bayton was led forward to the front of a huge stone throne upon which sat a withered old man whose eyes gleamed strangely. This was the *cacique*, Bayton judged.

The *cacique* addressed him. Bayton bowed slightly, then raised his head and looked about as one superior to them all. They did not seem to resent this. The withered old man was helped down until he stood directly in front of Bayton. He was trembling, but he put out a scrawny hand and touched Bayton on the arm, then gestured, and the guards cleared a path to another door.

Bayton was made to understand that was his apartment into which he was ushered now. There was considerable hand-clapping to summon servants. Half naked girls entered with huge jars of warm, perfumed water, and emptied the water into a stone tub equipped with a drain. A bath!

While the bath was being prepared, heaps of clothing were brought for him, platters of cold meat, queer fruits. Strains of strange music came from somewhere. The *cacique* and his men retired, but the maidens prepared to give Bayton his bath. He drove them out and dropped the skin hangings in front of the door. He heard them jabbering in the corridor.

Bayton took his bath, and dressed in some of the garments. His sheath knife was almost as sharp as a razor, and he managed to shave after a fashion. He kept his knife and revolver on his body, and his matches, flashlight, pipe, a pouch half filled with soggy tobacco.

No doubt he was being watched, for now the skins were lifted over the doorway, and some of the maidens entered again, to stand against the walls like servants awaiting orders. There was more strange music, and the *cacique* came, holding by the hand one of the most gorgeous women Bayton ever had seen.

She was tall, straight, young. Her skin was almost bronze, her eyes dark, her long dark hair cascading to her hips. Her clinging robe revealed a form over which an artist would have raved. She wore a girdle of gold in which gems flashed, and her firm young breasts were held up by a golden band.

The *cacique* made quite a speech, put the woman's hand in Bayton's and withdrew. The woman sat on the bench and drew Bayton down beside her. She crooned to him, ran her fingers through his thick hair. She clung to him so closely that Bayton could feel the warmth of her body.

Fiction stuff, he thought. Perhaps they took him for a god whose coming had long been awaited, and this was the fair daughter of the *cacique* who was given him for wife. He got up and strode around the room, stopped and looked at the maidens against the walls. They bowed their heads and hurried outside, dropping the skins over the doorway. He was alone with the *cacique's* daughter.

But he did not try to profit by the situation. She got hold of his hand and pulled him down beside her on the couch again, and spoke rapidly in her own tongue. There was love-making in her voice. And as Bayton leaned back, she slipped her arms around his neck and kissed him. That meant the same in any language.

He smiled at her, got up, took her hands and lifted her. Slowly, he led her to the doorway, lifted the skins and gestured for her to go. A puzzled expression came into her face, but she hung her head and obeyed.

Bayton ate more, slept, awoke to hear another burst of wild music. The *cacique* appeared with another beautiful maiden. The first had not been acceptable in Bayton's eyes, the *cacique* thought. Bayton shook his head after scarcely looking at the girl, and the *cacique* retired with her.

THE night passed, and in the morning, after another meal, Bayton went down the long corridor and to the entrance of the palace. The guards sprang to attention. One called in a strident voice, and others came running. They were not hostile—they formed an escort of honor.

So Bayton began his trips through the city. He learned a few words of the

language. He inspected buildings, saw how crops were raised and stored, tried to study the economic and political systems and religious belief. When he passed, men bowed in the dirt, but the young women stood still and straight so he could inspect them. He realized he was expected to pick his own mate after rejecting the *cacique's* daughter.

Here was material for a book. He charged his mind with data, for he had no writing materials. He made mental notes of the designs and inscriptions on the walls. What he would have given for a camera and a few rolls of film!

Then he realized there was civil turmoil over something, and that possibly he was the something. The old *cacique* had a political enemy in another man who seemed a sort of vizier. Bayton caught a word here and there. And once the *cacique's* daughter came running to his apartment, terrified, and jabbered a torrent of words he could not understand. She seized his arm, tried to pull him along with her, and Bayton went.

She led him through a corridor to the rear of the great room where he first had seen the *cacique*. Holding back the skins from a doorway, putting finger to lips in plea for silence, she let him look through.

The *cacique* was on the stone throne, and the vizier stood on the steps below him. The vizier was making a speech, his tone sarcastic. Sullen men lined the walls. They stepped out as the vizier reached a peroration and lifted his arm.

The old *cacique* was bristling with rage. He, too, lifted an arm, and with a gesture ordered the vizier to be gone. But the vizier laughed, and his followers surged forward. Bayton felt the girl beside him clutching his arm, jerking him, heard a few muttered words, saw the fright in her face. He understood a few words, and knew he was looking upon a political assassination.

Bayton brushed the skins aside and strode into the room. With great strides, he reached the steps which led to the throne, and sprang upon them. The vizier recoiled, shouted to his followers. A spear was hurled, and grazed Bayton's arm.

He jerked out the revolver he wore always beneath his robe, and fired one shot. Purposely, he hit the man who had thrown the spear. He howled and collapsed with a bullet in his leg. The others in the room prostrated themselves. The old *cacique* trembled, but remained on his throne.

Bayton felt the need of saying something.

"Outside!" he howled, gesturing wildly and lifting the gun again. "Out, rats! I don't know what it's all about, but the old boy's been good to me and I'm standing by him. Out!"

They howled and rushed out, taking the wounded man with them. Bayton found the *cacique's* daughter clinging to him, trying to kiss him, weeping and crooning at the same time.

The vizier was not done. Battle began that night. But Bayton wanted no part of it. He had assured himself that the old *cacique* probably could control the situation now. And Bayton wanted to get away during the confusion.

He had a small bundle which contained a few images he had found in a temple, a building brick with an inscription on it, other articles to prove his story if he lived to tell it. He made up a pack of cold food, and fastened a skin of water to his shoulder. As the battle raged, he slipped from the palace and got to the jungle trail, hurried along it, alert to dodge sentinels if they had not all hurried to the town.

He found the stream and started down it. Then began his long fight with the jungle again. He was a broken man when some tribesmen far down the river found him—the tribesmen who had seen white men before and knew something of their talk.

Then a long period of recuperation, and a return to the civilized world. Bayton wrote his second book. Dr. Burnsten denounced him as a fakir, despite the images and building brick which he had brought out. Scientific societies argued about it, and Bayton prospered.

A year later, it all seemed like a nightmare to him. Aviators who tried to locate the ancient city by the lake had failed. Explorers said the jungle could not be penetrated at that point for any important distance by an expedition large enough to be of valuable service.

Funds for such an expedition were not forthcoming. Interest died.

But a museum had the articles Bayton had brought out, and he had memories—

Swish . . . thud!
"What is name?"
"Phil Bayton, thou hunk of pony dung!"

The sun was sinking again. Doc Moore walked around nervously in front of the post, with Lucy Adkins clinging to his arm. They looked at Bayton.

"Don't worry," he croaked at them. "I'm a long way from breaking."

Chang inspected him.

"Remarkable!" Chang admitted. "But you'll break in time."

"Not as long as I have things to remember," Bayton said.

IT was a night of terror in Vladivostok. Bayton had been caught there waiting for a ship for the States. He had no personal concern in the political upheaval. It was the average human being he studied, not political moves.

He had gone to a café to dine. The place was crowded with men and women who spoke in whispers and glanced at one another furtively. They were well-dressed, prosperous-looking men and women, not hungry scum such as a man stumbled over out in the streets.

Bayton knew he was being observed closely. He was a stranger here, and at the moment all strangers were under suspicion.

He glanced up from his food as somebody stopped at his table. He saw a woman, tall and dark and dressed becomingly. Her eyes were dancing with excitement, and her smile was a ravishing thing. She was touching the back of a chair across the small table from Bayton.

"It is permitted?" she asked.

Bayton arose, bowed, held the chair for her while she seated herself. She stripped off her long gloves as she looked around nervously. Jewels flashed in the rings she wore.

"You may call me Olga," she said. "And act as though we were very friendly, as though we were—perhaps lovers."

Bayton smiled. "It should not be difficult for any man to act that way toward you, madame."

"Mademoiselle," she corrected.

"But I am curious to know—"

She stopped him with a gesture. "To know why I come to your table, pretend we are old acquaintances? I am in danger, and need a friend."

"And have none? Don't you run a risk making a friend of a stranger?"

"In these days, strangers are often better friends than those one knows well," she said.

The waiter hovered near. Bayton beckoned him, raised his eyebrows at the woman. She ordered food and wine. The waiter hurried away.

"Music and laughter," she said. "Yet they are sitting on a volcano. That is Russia. They know what may happen at any moment, but will not admit it."

"I'm sailing in the morning for Seattle," Bayton said.

"Yes, I know."

"You know?"

"I have made it my business to know. I have need of the services of a man who is sailing immediately, a man who can be trusted, preferably an American."

"You are sure I can be trusted?"

"I am sure," she said, simply.

"What is it you wish?" Bayton asked.

"After we have dined, you'll pretend we are leaving. Naturally, you will hold my cloak for me. Just inside, at the throat, is a package. As you help me with the cloak, take the package in such a manner that none will see."

"And then—?" Bayton asked.

"You are to sail on the *Continental*. I shall try to get aboard also. If I manage, you will kindly return the package to me. If I cannot manage, you will open the package and deliver the contents to the person whose name and address you will find written on a slip of paper inside. The address is in San Francisco. You will be well rewarded."

"Will you tell me what the package contains?"

Her face grew bitter. "All that is left of a dynasty." Quickly, she smiled again for the benefit of those who might be watching.

BAYTON continued his meal. There was music and dancing. The woman who called herself Olga chatted with him, smiled, acted like a woman flirting a little. Bayton observed her closely. She was a woman of culture and refinement, no jewel-bedecked adventuress such as could be found in almost every café in Russia at that hour.

They finished their dinner. She nodded slightly, and Bayton rose quickly and walked around to her. He clutched the cloak as she got out of her chair, smiling at him over her shoulder.

"Pray that we meet on the ship," she whispered.

He pretended to laugh at what she said. He got the package without much difficulty, and slipped it into the pocket of his overcoat as he put it on. He tossed money to the waiter, who bowed and waved them toward the door.

They were almost to the door when the café was invaded. Shouted orders, rushing soldiers, a sudden cessation of the music brought screams from the diners. Faces turned white.

Bayton found himself and the woman the center of a charge. She was torn from his side. He had a glimpse of her white face, then others were between them.

"What—?" Bayton began.

An officer brushed against him, seized his arm and motioned him to the door. "For questioning."

"I'm Phil Bayton, an American. I know nothing of the woman. She came to my table uninvited. I supposed she was a—"

The officer shook his head. "Not that one. However, we have been watching her. We know you are not one of her intimates. A few questions—"

Bayton seemed to acquiesce. He buttoned his overcoat and turned up the collar. His huge bulk filled the doorway as he passed through. There was turmoil outside. The woman was being put into a carriage. The officer stepped forward, shouting commands.

Bayton struck aside a soldier and ran. A gun exploded behind him, but the bullet sang off to his right. Then he was in deep shadows.

He made the ship safely. The captain, an old friend, hid him until sailing time. Later, in his cabin, he took out the package and looked at it. Inside the paper wrapping was a bag of chamois. Inside the bag was a mass of glittering jewels and a scrap of paper containing a name and address. The name was that of a Russian refugee in San Francisco, a man before whom thousands formerly had bowed.

Bayton whistled, then stowed the bag away safely. He left his cabin and drifted to the smoking room. As he sipped his drink, he listened to the talk of two passengers at a table a few feet away.

"Yes, the Princess Olga . . . grabbed her and hustled her away to prison . . . firing squad this morning . ."

Bayton gulped the remainder of his drink quickly. He was thinking of her regal bearing, her brave smile. He knew now who had missed the boat, and why. . .

Swish . . . thud!
"What is name?"
"Phil Bayton."

IT had grown dark again. The dial of the little clock was illuminated by the candle. Bayton found his eyes focused on it, watching the hands. Fifteen . . . fourteen . . . thirteen minutes more, and the knout would cut into his back again!

Doc Moore and Lucy Adkins were sitting a few feet away, their faces ghastly in the moonlight.

"Hello . . . people," Bayton croaked.

"Bayton!" Doc Moore cried. "You can't endure much more, man. There can be only one end."

"Why should you weaken?" Bayton asked. He tried to laugh, hoping Chang was near enough to hear it, but only a croaking sound came from his throat. "How are you, Miss Adkins?"

"I—I'm all right," she said.

"Maybe all of us will be, if I can hold on a little longer. Something may happen at dawn."

"What?" Doc Moore cried. "What can—"

"Can't tell you now. Our handsome friend may understand English."

"He's not the same one," Doc Moore said. "They change 'em every few hours."

"They all look . . . alike to me," Bayton replied. "Must stop talking . . . save strength . ."

He had difficulty sending his mind away this time. He closed his eyes.

"Must get my mind—far away—" he muttered.

HE hadn't really been taking sides that time in Mexico. He had been studying ancient civilizations again. He knew vaguely there was dissention, talk of a revolution. But he had already made plans to leave.

In the pink dawn, shots awakened him. He tumbled out of bed and into his clothes. By the time he was ready to leave his room, a battle was in progress in the street and around the plaza.

The hotel office was a scene of excitement. The small windows had been shattered. Two wounded men were groaning on the floor, having crawled in from the street.

Bayton wanted to get away. He wanted none of this. He had the data he had come to collect, and his publishers were waiting for his new book. He was eager to get back to New York.

The battle surged to the other side of town. Bayton engaged a frightened peon to carry his scant luggage. They hurried down the street to the railroad station.

Government troops held the station. A train was due soon, and officials might wish to escape on it if the battle went against them. They did not bother Bayton, for they knew him and his purpose there.

Bayton prepared to depart on the train. The surge of battle came toward the station. It was engulfed, men were firing around it, falling, dying. Bayton tried to leave, to go up the tracks. Twice he was driven back from the door. He was not sure who was firing at him.

On the platform, not far from the door, was an abandoned machine gun ready for service. Its crew had fled. Bayton knew how to work that gun alone. If he could clear a path with it, perhaps he could get through.

There came a lull in the fighting, and he darted out on the platform. Bullets were zipping around him. They were firing at him, and they knew his identity, knew he had no concern in this. So Bayton went into action.

He gave a screech of defiance such as he had given in his Legion days. The gun stuttered and swept the end of the platform clean. Bayton left it and started to run down the track.

He pitched forward into flaming oblivion.

It was dusk when he regained consciousness. Moaning men were on every side of him. There was a stench of blood: He twisted from the squirming pile. Somebody grasped his arm and helped him.

"Ah, *señor,* you live again? I saw it, señor. They creased your head with a bullet, then picked you up and tumbled you in here with the rest of us."

"Who did?" Bayton asked.

"The rebels. They were victorious, señor. The *federalistas* fled on the train. But you sprayed them well with that gun, señor. However—"

"It was the rebels I sprayed?" Bayton asked.

"The rebels? *Sí, señor!* So you know what will happen to you at dawn, as will happen to the rest of us. But a man lives only once, and perhaps the next life will be better. Could I trouble you for a cigarette, *señor?*"

"We'll both smoke," Bayton replied.

They lit smokes, and Bayton passed the remainder of the package to men near him.

"It will be dawn in an hour," the man beside Bayton said. "Twenty-eight of us here. The firing squad will have a busy time of it. You are an *Americaño,* it is true, but you sprayed them with bullets, *señor!* And a damned good job you did!"

Dawn crept through the window. The mist swept through and sweetened the air. Men carrying rifles appeared in front of the door.

A screaming man was led out and his arms bound behind him. Another went stoically. Boots thumped the ground as they were led away. A volley crashed.

The men came back and opened the

door again. They jerked out another man. One fought, and they thumped his skull with a gun butt. Another volley cracked in the gathering day.

Two by two.

"I am happy to have met you, *señor,* and to have had this last smoke with you," the man beside Bayton said. "I am Felipe Cortez—not that it matters now. My parents expected great things of me. *Señor, á Dios!*"

"*'Dios,*" Bayton muttered, choking.

They led Felipe Cortez out and tied his arms behind his back. The end of the cigarette still dangled from his lips.

"Come, *señor,* or we come in for you," growled a man at the door.

"Come in for me. It'll make it more interesting," Bayton growled in reply.

"It is best to submit and die quickly and quietly, *señor.* That is much better than to die slowly, by inches, as will surely happen to you if you cause us annoyance. Come out."

"Come in. I am waiting, scum!" Bayton called.

But they did not come. The *federalistas* had returned with reinforcements. A volley smote the firing squad even as Felipe Cortez died with a smile of derision on his lips. Battle raged again. And in time Bayton was released, and went to New York to write his book. . . .

Swish . . . thud!
"What is name?"
"I . . . I . ."
"What is name?"

BAYTON opened his paining eyes. He tried to collect the little strength he had remaining. His lips twitched when he tried to move them. He seemed stricken dumb.

He saw Doc Moore's burning eyes. Lucy Adkins was on her feet, holding out her hands to him imploringly.

"Chang! Master!" the executioner called. "He cannot give answer!"

Chang came hurrying from the nearest cooking fire, where he had been giving orders to his men.

"So it is the end?" Chang asked.

Pain shot along Bayton's parched throat. He closed his eyes, gulped.

"I . . . am . .. Phil . . . Bayton," he croaked. "And you . . . Chang . . . you scum . ."

Chang's eyes glittered.

"I think one more time," he said. "One more fifteen minutes."

Bayton kept his eyes closed. He was trying to start a flow of saliva down into his throat. He did not see the clock now, but could hear it ticking. Each tick brought the blow of the knout nearer. It would cut into his lacerated back. It would bite and sting. Then the question would come, and he must be able to answer. Doc Moore and the little nurse were depending on him.

His mind refused to invade the field of memory again. Mind and body both were almost at the end of endurance. If he could only think of something!

There was that expedition into Africa, when the natives had attacked. There had been a political move behind that. The natives had been furnished new and modern firearms. Rifles had cracked, as they were cracking now.

As they were cracking now!

Bayton heard Doc Moore yell something, heard Lucy Adkins give a wild cry of alarm. He fought to get his eyes open. Chang's men were scattering, yelling, firing, running for their ponies. The prisoners were forgotten. The Chinese regulars had arrived to make their surprise attack.

Then Doc Moore was cutting away the thongs which bound him to the post, and Lucy Adkins was holding water to his lips. A Chinese officer was hurrying toward them.

Bayton was thinking: "A great chapter for the new book . . . write the things you've lived . . . Sue . . . Sue Fielding, I've had enough of wandering . . . I'm coming to find you . . . as soon as I can."

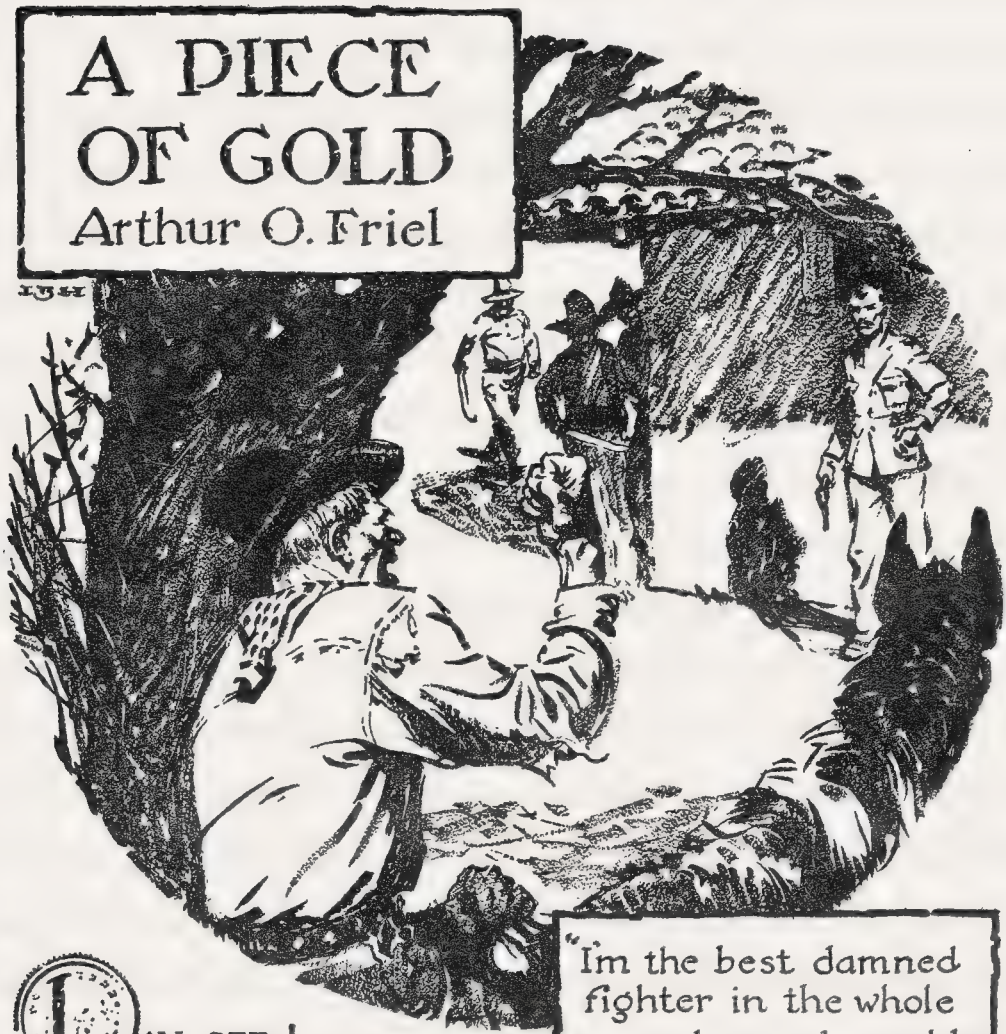
"Bayton!" Doc Moore was babbling. "It was just in time. You couldn't have held on half an hour longer."

Bayton smiled weakly. "Much longer than that . . . I had many memories left."

And they wondered what he meant by that, and thought perhaps his mind was wandering because of what he had endured.

A PIECE OF GOLD

Arthur O. Friel



"I'm the best damned fighter in the whole damned world

LAY OFF !

I said lay off that lad! Take somebody your size. Me, for instance.

I don't care what it's about, tough guy. I've seen *guapos* like you before. Take a walk.

Huh? Well, you—

All right, lad, let's go. He won't wake up for quite a while. And I think a couple of his teeth are stuck in my fist. There's a place around the corner where we can sterilize it.

Buen' noche', Pablo! Slop some *caballo blanco* over this, will you? The stuff you sell the tourists when they're too tight to know the difference. Ouch! Hellfire! But all right, *amigo,* all right. Now fetch a couple of real Maracaibos over to the corner table.

What say, Pablo? I don't know who he was. Couldn't see him well. Big, dark, hat pulled down—just a thug. But wait a minute. Seems to me there was something familiar about him, and—

Judas! I've got it! He was in the gang that—

Never mind. Just talking in my sleep, Pablo. Go on back to your bar.

Well, stranger, take your medicine and you'll feel better. You look pale. Or is that your natural color? New come in Venezuela, maybe? Uh-huh. You picked a sweet part of town to explore at this time of night. Looking for anything particular?

Local color! Cripes! What for?

Feature articles for a syndicate. Hm!

Impressions of our special correspondent on the spot. And about right, for once. You sure were on the spot just now, and your features came near getting impressed all out of shape. That playmate of yours is an ugly cuss, with a hate for North Americans. And I can tell you why, if you'll promise not to write any real names.

A PAL of mine, named Dugan, was down on the *llanos*, south of here. And after knocking around some and getting in bad with local authorities, he wasn't blowing any horns to let people know where he was. All he wanted was to ride along up to this neat little city of Caracas, where nobody knew him and the mountain air was reasonably cool and some gold pieces would buy him plenty of chilled ale.

He had the gold pieces. In a money belt under his thin old shirt. And an army .45 on a cartridge belt outside. And a good tough horse under him; a *llanos* horse that could take the sun and keep going. And some water in his calabash bottle, and nothing to do till tomorrow, if then. Nothing but watch the endless brown plains with half an eye, sizing up the far scattered bunches of dull green cactus or droopy brown palms and the empty blue haze everywhere else. Sitting pretty, you might think. But he was out of grub.

Not a bite to eat. Not a thing to shoot. Not even a lizard or a snake crawling through the dead grass. You can eat them if you have to—and can find them. When you can't, money and bullets don't mean a thing. Whole armies have died of hunger on those hellish flats.

The red-hot sun was beating straight down when Dugan sighted a little smudge of smoke off to the northwest. It rose from a long low streak of dark green that probably meant a creek, and maybe a *rancho*. Anyway it looked like eats. So he swung toward it, loosening up his gun.

Halfway there, he stopped behind a bunch of cactus, considering things. He wanted more than a handout; food enough to keep him going several more days. So he opened his shirt and fished a gold *morrocota* out of his money belt. That's twenty dollars to you. And a lot more than he wanted to show anybody down there. Gold's very uncommon on the *llanos*, and liable to be a trouble-maker. But he hadn't any silver.

So, dropping the yellow boy into his shabby pants, he rode to the *rancho*. But there wasn't any *rancho*, or even a *ranchería*—a hut. A fire, and some meat roasting on a pole platform, and a fresh cow-hide on the ground, and a million black flies, and nothing else. Not a man in sight. And not a sound but the fly-buzz.

DUGAN looked at the big slabs of roasting beef and went to work. He forced his horse up to the fire, grabbed a half-broiled slice of red meat, and tore into it with his teeth. It was tough, but his jaws were powerful, and his appetite too. Fact is, he was just about starved for fresh meat, and he ate that way. Full up, he took a drink from his water bottle and then, grinning around, said:

"*Gracias!* Thanks, friends, whoever you are!"

Nothing answered. Nothing moved. He turned his horse to the steep-sided creek, got down to a shallow pool, and filled up his horse. Then they scrambled back up the bank—and stopped.

Men were there now. A dozen men who'd seen him coming, hidden in the bush, watched his actions, and decided to let him go. Now they were squatting around the fire, without a gun in sight. The biggest one, standing up, was turning over a slice of meat.

Peaceable fellows, if you believed what you saw. The big cook, though, was a hard-looking bird; heavy-jawed, flat-nosed, brown-black; Indian, mixed with a little low-down white. The others were the usual *mestizos*, sort of yellow, and one was white. Just a boy, that one, maybe sixteen years old, but quite tall.

Now the big one slapped down the slab of beef and gave Dugan a side look. A nasty, sneering look that showed he thought he was plenty tough and wanted everybody to know it. And you can't look at Dugan like that and get away with it. All ready to say "Thanks, fel-

lows, and so long," he suddenly burned up.

He jumped off his horse, took some long steps, and socked. The cook saw him coming and squared off, but too slow. Dugan's fist squashed his flat nose flatter. Then Dugan walked back, swung up, and sat saying nothing, watching the others.

They were all up on their feet now, and very tight-eyed. But not doing anything yet. They looked at their cook, who was wobbling on his feet and holding his nose and bleeding all over his dirty shirt. They looked at Dugan, sitting with a thumb hooked over his gun-belt. Then Dugan got a surprise. The white boy, youngest of the lot, took control.

"*Buenas tardes!*" he said, sharp and clear. "Good afternoon, and welcome! Will you stop for a time at this poor place of mine?"

Spanish. High class. Educated in real Spanish speech. Not a thick Indian slur in his voice, not a word left out or misspoken; not the common lingo of the *llanos*. And his face was like his talk: sharp, clear-cut, with straight black brows and straightforward brown eyes and a firm nose and chin.

Dugan liked him. But he said:

"No, thanks. I'm traveling."

The white lad eyed him a minute, then said:

"As you will. But, one moment! Jeromo, give our guest a trifle more of meat."

ONE of the ragged *mestizos* looked at the roasting beef, picked out a big slab with a forked stick, and brought it, smoking hot, to Dugan. Dugan took the stick with his left hand, nodded, and rode out, with his right hand loose and his heels steering his horse and his ears listening. And nothing happened.

If the tough guy started after him with a gun somebody stopped him. So Dugan was free to go, with a parting present of grub from men who were hard up themselves. Men thin and shabby, feeding off one skinny cow but giving a hungry stranger their best flank steak, and no questions asked.

It got Dugan. Out on the flats he yanked his horse around and rode back to the fire. He dug up his gold-piece and handed it down to the white boy, as if just shaking good-by. The lad took his hand, then stared at what he'd got. Gold, from a starved tramp—

He stood paralyzed. Then, as Dugan turned away, his face turned red as hell-fire. And he swore like the devil.

He knew some words that were very impolite. The gist of his speech was:

"Damn you, if you think you can insult me that way, try to get out of here alive!"

And he threw the money at Dugan's face. Dugan dodged without thinking, the way he always side-slips a crack at his jaw; and the coin flew away among the trees. Then he said:

"My mistake. And, thanking you once more, *adios!*"

With that he heaved his hot steak back at the fire and rode out again—backwards, and more than ready to shoot now. He'd paid twenty dollars for a tough piece of meat, and if that wasn't good enough for a proud Spanish boy—

Well, that's the way Dugan's built. Sort of temperamental. Take him right, and he'll give you his shirt. Get him wrong, and that's different. And the Irish, if you don't happen to know it, have better reasons to get proud than anything that ever came out of Spain. A little matter of blood. There haven't been so many Africans in Ireland.

But that seemed to be the end of that. The insulted lad got a grip on himself, maybe. Anyway, Dugan turned his horse after awhile and rode along with no more trouble, except with himself. He cussed himself out for a double dumb fool; first for wasting a perfectly good gold piece, and then for throwing away his next meal, with nothing in sight.

"After knocking around this tough old world as long as you have, you ought to know enough to take all you can get and give up nothing," he growled. "Why the hell can't you learn anything, you damn thick goat? No brains! That's you!"

And so on. But then, with that out of his system, he shoved the whole thing away behind him. His belly was full now, so what of it?

Snoozing in his saddle, with one ear

open, he crawled along north. His horse traveled the same way, head down, eyes almost shut, body slack, but legs moving. A Northern horse would have fallen dead under that afternoon sun, but this one was born to it. So by sundown they were several miles away.

Then they found a little water hole and stopped there. Dugan hung his hammock among some half dead palm trees and unsaddled his horse and went to bed. He was hungry again, but he had some tobacco and *tabarí* bark (cigarette wrappers to you); and tobacco and water can carry you a long way without eats. And the horse knew how to feed himself. So he watched the sky turn dark and the stars jump out and march double quick from east to west, and lay just looking up, perfectly peaceful. And that, if you'd like to know it, was one big reason why Dugan was where he was.

Freedom. No boss. No time clocks. No whistles blowing at you. No labor leader or cheap politician kicking you in the pants to make you go his way or starve. Just drifting loose and free by day, hungry maybe, but your own man anyway. And at night the bright old stars laugh down at you, and the clean wind sings over you, and somehow you see things away up in the deep old sky that lift you up out of your heavy body and—

Oh well, you wouldn't know. You're just a city newspaper man. Hey, Pablo! *Otra vez!* The same!

SO Dugan finished his smoke and settled down for the night. After awhile, though, he suddenly woke up. The stars had moved along west, but everything else seemed the same. Lying quiet, he slid his eyes around and sneaked his gun out. Something was around there. Something he couldn't see yet, but—

Then a quiet voice said:

"*Señor,* I apologize for disturbing you. If it is convenient, I would like to talk further with you."

Dugan sat up and slid his gun back into its holster.

"All right, lad," he said. "Come on."

And up from the dark ground came the white boy. He walked straight in, head high, hands down and empty. But across his dim gray-white pants was a wide dark cartridge-belt, with heavy hand-guns swinging low on his legs.

A two-gun kid, and pretty capable. Able to find Dugan at night, sleeping in a dark bush without a fire, far away from the place he'd left. And able to get into easy gunshot without a noise, and stay out of sight after that, only a few yards off. He sure knew his way around.

And yet he was sort of lost, as Dugan soon learned. Right now Dugan said:

"Bring in the other boys."

"*No hay,*" said the lad. "I am alone."

Dugan took his word for it. And he said:

"All right. Come sit down."

The lad came and sat in the hammock, put both elbows on his knees and sat staring at the dark.

"Well," said Dugan, "what's on your mind?"

The lad sat still. Suddenly he asked:

"Was that *morrocota* you gave me all you had!"

Dugan tightened up. And he said:

"What the hell do you think? Do I look like a gold mine?"

"No," said the lad. "And I am most sorry that I acted as I did. I have looked far for that piece of money since you left, hoping I could return it to you. It is lost. Unless Pompeyo finds it tomorrow. And—" he laughed, short and sharp "—if he finds it, it is truly lost!"

Dugan, watching him sidewise, thought that over and got the answer. It's funny, but there's something in names. Pompeyo. Pompous. A swelled head with a little mind. And who, in this lad's gang, added up that way? Only one.

But he asked the question anyway, saying:

"Who's he? And what about him?"

The lad's fingers dug into his thin cheeks. Suddenly he started up and went to walking. Up and down, up and down, swinging short on his heels, arms stiff, hands shut. A slim stick of dynamite, he was, aching to explode but still holding in. Dugan touched him off.

"Oh well," he said, "if you came all the way over here just to take a walk, walk back. I'm tired."

The lad stopped, stood stiff a second, then turned his face up to the sky and blasted off like a volcano. His words didn't make sense, and Dugan let him rave. After awhile he eased up and apologized:

"You will perhaps overlook my ugly temper. I can't always control it."

"That's all right," said Dugan. "Of course I always control mine. But I can understand."

The lad gave him a quick look and broke out laughing, remembering Dugan's hasty actions back yonder. And that was just what he needed. Laughed out, he sat down and talked sense.

"*Señor,*" he said, "you are a man older than I am. You seem to have traveled far. You are perhaps a *Norteamericano.* No?"

"*Sí,*" said Dugan. "I am. So?"

"So was my mother," said the lad. "But that does not matter. She and my *padre* are dead. I am alone. And I need some advice."

He looked off again into the dark. Alone. Uh-huh. Alone with two guns and a gang. But all alone in his own mind. And that's different.

"Well, I'm a poor adviser," said Dugan, "and I don't know much. If I did I wouldn't be here. But I'm listening."

THERE was quite a lot to listen to. And some of it was old stuff, in a way. The lad's father had been a fairly prosperous rancher and had gotten along all right with the governor of Guárico, who held his job a long time. And it takes a wise man to govern any State down here and keep his health.

This one did, and finally died from natural causes, and everybody was sorry. Believe it or not, that can happen here. But not often.

But then things got back to normal. The next governor sent down here was—

Huh? Sure. I said sent, not elected. Oh yes, they have "elections" in these "republics." But don't kid yourself. They're all in the bag.

The next governor of Guárico was the usual thing, getting rich quick; taxing everybody stony broke, then seizing property, and jailing or shooting anybody that objected. Efficient, he was. And the plush-bottomed *políticos* up here in Caracas, getting their percentage, purred all over the place and backed him up with the army. So he got away with murder, and plenty of it. The same old stuff.

And so this lad's father, who had guts, got himself shot for refusing to turn pauper without a fight. And the mother, after riding around awhile in the *llanos* with a queer stare in her eyes and never a word, quietly fell dead off her horse. And the boy was left with his old man's guns and a few of his old man's riders to go ahead from there. His name, by the way, was Lorenzo.

"I see," said Dugan. "So now you'd like to blast all the politicians and army slaves to hell and get your own back. But it can't be done, lad. I've been up against them both, and they're tough while they last. The only thing to do is keep living till things change."

Lorenzo nodded shortly.

"I know," he said, "that is sensible. But how to live? We are few and poorly armed. We have few cartridges and no food. You saw what we were eating. Already we are cattle thieves—though we steal only to eat. Before long we shall be caught at it and shot or run out. So there are only two things to do: join some outlaw gang or—"

His teeth clicked shut. Through them he finished:

"Or, as you say, get my own back. Or some of it. And, *por Dios,* that I mean to do!"

He sprang up, facing Dugan.

"Will you join me," he asked, "in a ride to my old home?"

"WHY should I?" asked Dugan.

The lad's eyes bored into him. And he said:

"You might get your *morrocota* back."

"How?" asked Dugan.

The lad hesitated. Dugan laughed.

"No go," he said. "I can get along without that *morrocota,* and also without army bullets clogging up my digestion. I know how you feel, lad. But according to your own story—"

"Wait, please!" snapped Lorenzo.

"You don't know it all yet. It's like this—"

And he shot the works.

His old man had made money. Like every other sensible man down here, he hadn't put it all into a bank. Some of it, maybe most of it, was stowed away somewhere in his house. And Lorenzo thought he knew where it was.

But Pompeyo, the big tough guy, suspected something like that. And he was wearing Lorenzo down. He had drifted in here from Cuba, and knocked smaller men around till they were afraid of him and stayed that way. Hearing that, Dugan understood how Pompeyo had learned to put up his fists. A cheap plug-ugly who'd tried to be a prize-fighter in Havana, probably, but hadn't made good. But, down here, good enough to beat up all comers, till an Irish-American came along.

So now he had this little gang under his thumb, and was getting insolent to his boy boss Lorenzo. And Lorenzo, with a brain in his head, saw what was coming but didn't know how to handle it. It wouldn't be long now before Pompeyo and starvation and desperation would all add up to get the lad tied to a tree and tortured till he let out what he might know about his old man's money. On the other hand, if Lorenzo shot these fellows up, he'd have no gang to help him get that money. And he hated to shoot anybody, anyway, except the killers who'd murdered his father and—

There he stopped, gritting his teeth. And Dugan warmed up. A game lad, this one, in a tight corner, asking a bigger and older scrapper to help him out and getting no answer but a laugh. He got it now.

"*Vamonos!*" said Dugan. "Let's go!"

THEY rode south till the starlight showed the old dark tree line. No fire was burning. Nobody was on guard. And Dugan said:

"Just show me Pompeyo."

"*Mucho gusto,*" said Lorenzo, grinning white and hard.

They tied their horses and walked in. Lorenzo pointed out a hammock and stood watching.

Pompeyo, snoring loud with a rifle across his chest, woke up to a slap across his flat face. The smack of that slap woke up everybody else. Men bounced up with guns or machetes ready. Then Lorenzo snapped:

"*Alto!* Hold everything!"

And everybody, recognizing his voice, held back. Everybody but Pompeyo. He took one look at Dugan and grabbed his gun. Dugan punched him between the eyes and threw the gun away. Then he bore down hard, and the hammock-rope broke. Pompeyo flopped, and when he hit the ground Dugan gave him another crack with one hand and yanked his pants down with the other. And before Pompeyo could grab out any knife he might have in those pants Dugan heaved him up straight and talked to him.

Never mind the words. Dugan used the language those uneducated boys down on the *llanos* understand. Then he really went to work on that tough mug, showing him and all hands what a workmanlike job of beating up looked like when it was finished.

It wasn't all one-sided. Pompeyo fought hard in his own way. But with his feet tangled up in his pants he was licked before he started. So finally Dugan gave him a stiff kick and said:

"*Vaya!* Outside!"

Pompeyo staggered out, leaving his pants behind him. Out with nothing but a dirty shirt and his life, and lucky to be alive, at that. Then Dugan asked:

"Any of you other guys got any objections?"

The *mestizos* stayed quiet a minute, getting their slow minds together. Then they broke loose, laughing like loons. They slapped their legs and bellies and howled ya-ha's after their busted bully. No objections. Anything but.

Then Lorenzo barked:

"Mount! We ride!"

Snappy as an army command, that was. And the lad stood with fists on his belt guns. And nobody laughed any more.

When they all rode out they took along Pompeyo's horse. But they left his rifle, with half a dozen cartridges in it, lying across his pants. With that he could manage to live and travel, but not fast enough to interfere with Lorenzo's

The horse let go, and how!

ideas. Or so they thought. They came near guessing wrong.

They headed northeast, at a sensible long distance gait. The night wind, sweeping inland from the far-away ocean, blew straight into their faces. All around, the flat land was dark and quiet; and overhead the wide sky gave down a ghostly light of big stars. Along toward morning a thin old moon crawled up, and they rode faster. Then, near sunrise, they stopped at another dry creek; dug for water, found some, and hung their hammocks.

Lorenzo gave orders and some men rode out. Before long they came back driving a half-grown bullock; slaughtered it, broiled slices on sticks over a small fire, and then killed the fire. When the sun rose there was no smoke.

Dugan was tired. He'd had very little sleep since yesterday morning. Yawning, he asked:

"Are we near?"

"Quite near," said Lorenzo. "And now—"

"Skip it," said Dugan, "till I've had a snooze."

The lad scowled. But then he admitted:

"That may be wise."

"Wise or otherwise, I'm resting," said Dugan. And, stowing his gun inside his shirt, he did. When he woke up it was afternoon. Siesta time. But Lorenzo, sitting in his hammock, was not asleep. Hands shut on his knees, he was burning up with impatience.

"If you are ready now—" he said.

Dugan stretched and said:

"All ready. What's your big idea?"

"This," said the lad. "You are not known here. You can ride to my home and see what is there. Then—if you wish to come back to me—you can tell me."

Dugan thought that over and said:

"*Cómo no?* Why not?"

"*Bueno!*" said Lorenzo. He jumped up and yelled an order. The peons, some on guard and some snoozing in their hammocks, all sprang to attention when

their boss's voice cracked out. They knew they'd better, now that he had a big man-handler on his side. And in no time Dugan was mounted and ready to go.

"Where to?" Dugan asked then.

"This man will show you," Lorenzo told him. And there was a short fellow, with a dull face but sharp eyes, waiting on horseback. So Dugan rode out.

No good-bys, no good-lucks, nothing but one straight look from the tight-mouthed lad who was putting his life in Dugan's hands. Dugan could, if he would, double-cross this poor little gang and get them all shot. Or he could just ditch them, go his own way alone, and let them starve. It was all up to him.

NOW he and his guide traveled in the roasting afternoon heat, keeping near the crooked little *caño*, using the shade and cover of the waterside trees. After some time the guide stopped and pointed. Then he swung around and rode back fast.

Dugan poked along. Soon the trees opened at his right, and there was a road and a short wide bridge across the creek. Beyond was a low, thick-walled old Spanish house, asleep in the sun. He crossed the bridge, stopped, looked around again. A prosperous sort of place, this, and well planned. But no life.

Not in sight, anyway. But, moving quietly over to the corral, he found three horses lying down, and signs of others leading out; picketed somewhere, maybe, in the waterside grove. Nothing else. Any men living here must be drowsing inside the walls.

After thinking a minute Dugan hid his cartridge belt in his hammock-roll; slid his gun inside his shirt, down under the money belt; then rode to the house. It was about time for people to be waking up from siesta. So he pounded on the back door.

Soon it opened, and a heavy-faced *mestizo* growled at him:

"*Qué quiere?* What do you want?"

"To see the boss," said Dugan.

"What for?"

"I'll tell him that."

The fellow gave him a sneering look, sizing up his poor clothes, and grunted:

"No jobs here. *Vaya!*" And he slammed the door.

Dugan got sore. He shoved at the door, found it barred, and raised a racket. His horse was a kicker; and Dugan backed him around, kicked him in the belly, and hung on. The horse let go, and how!

His heels went *slam* into the door, and again *slam*, and so on. In the hollow patio inside, the noise would wake the dead.

Voices yelled, and Dugan jumped his horse away from there. He got behind a thick tree and waited. Then the door yanked open and a man with a revolver stood there.

And around both sides of the wide house came other men with machetes, who'd gone out the front way.

The gun-fighter was a lanky yellow-white man in white clothes, with a military cut to the open coat, and no shirt on. The others were hard-looking yellow-browns in drab pants and shirts, all dressed alike. Dugan counted them. Ten in all.

"*Maldito!*" the boss snarled. "Where is the so-and-so, and what the—"

"Right here!" shouted Dugan. "And I want to see the boss of this lousy dump!"

He stayed behind his tree, though, just sticking his head out. The boss lifted his gun, but held it quiet. And he said:

"Come here, then, and see me!"

Dugan came out and put on an act. He stuck out his jaw and swaggered in his saddle and shook his right fist. And, seeing that fist was empty, the master let his gun sink.

"I'm a gentleman, I am!" Dugan yelled. "And a fighting man, too. I came here to see a gentleman and got a door slammed in my face. Now I can lick you and your whole crowd with one hand. I am the best damned fighter in the whole damned world, I am! Go get the rest of your gang, and I'll show you!"

Then he pulled a crooked grin and swayed back as if a little off balance. The boss began to grin; a cold, cruel grin like a crocodile. And one of the *mestizos* said:

"*'Sta loco.* He's crazy in the head."

"*El sol,*" said another. "The sun."

But the master said:

"Shut up, you!" Then, to Dugan: "I have no more men, Señor Fighting Gentleman. But let's see what you can do with these few weak little boys. Step down and fight your way through to me."

The hard guys grinned, and the boss licked his thin lips. And Dugan howled:

"I'll show you! I'll—"

There he made his horse kick up again. And then, making a show of fighting the animal, he managed a runaway. The horse bolted through the trees, with Dugan yelling:

"I'll come back and bust you all!"

And so he was out and away. One gunshot cracked after him, but no more. And nobody chased after him. There were only three horses in the corral, and it was too hot to ride, so to hell with the poor nut!

THE poor nut took cover in the upstream bush till after dark. Then he made a swing back toward Lorenzo's camp, riding in the open, but keeping the tree line in sight. No light showed anywhere. But after awhile two men on horseback rode out, closed in, looked at him, and led on into the trees. And there Lorenzo, forgetting his stiff control for a minute, grabbed him in the old Spanish embrace.

"*Bienvenido!*" laughed the lad. "Welcome back!" Then, standing off: "How did it go?"

"All right," said Dugan. "I tried to get inside, but they wouldn't let me. So I made them come out."

When he told how he'd brought them out, Lorenzo snickered and the others laughed, low and hard. Then the lad's dim face turned tight.

"That leader—what did he look like?" he asked. And when he heard, he said in a bitter tone:

"El Carnicero! The Butcher! Do you hear, men? Our old home is now the den of Gaspar Lopez!"

A growl went among the fellows grouped around. And he went on:

"Gaspar Lopez, the assassin! The murderer, the torturer, the spy of our new governor! He has been given that place to hold, perhaps to own. You saw no cattle, *amigo?*"

"No sign," Dugan told him. "Not even a dog around."

"No. All dogs hate Lopez as they hate a snake," said Lorenzo. "And the cattle must have been driven off and sold, the governor taking the money and Lopez the ranch. And those men with him are some of his own brutes. *Diablo!* Do you realize, *amigo,* just how they would have amused themselves with you if you had been as simple as they thought?"

"*Poco-á-poco,* perhaps," said Dugan. Which, down yonder, means keeping a man alive a long time, tied to a tree, and cutting off a piece now and then.

"Exactly," said Lorenzo. "Thank God, my father was spared that, at least! A bullet in battle, that is clean. But—"

There he wheeled around and went to walking up and down; suddenly stopped, and let go, like that other time at Dugan's camp, blasting off the hot hate that was boiling in him. His men, too, stood cursing Lopez and others. But soon the lad got a grip on himself and came back, scowling with thought.

"Ten men," he said. "With rifles. They have guns, of course, even if you saw none. And our cartridges are few. But it can be managed."

"How?" asked Dugan.

"Some of us must go over the roof, and so down into the patio. The eaves are low, and if a man stands on another's shoulders and then creeps up—"

"Uh-huh," said Dugan. "And if somebody's awake inside to pop you as you come—"

"That's a chance we must take," said Lorenzo.

But at that there was a mutter among the men, and one said:

"*Porqué?* For what must we do that? For what real good?"

"*Qué diablo!*" Lorenzo snapped. "Are you growing afraid?"

"No," the other man grunted. "Not of any fight with a fair chance. But, *cra,* to jump into a trap for the sake of a few supplies—that is too much! Better starve on the *llanos* than die like rats!"

Dugan stared at the fellow, then at

Lorenzo, and saw that the lad was keeping them in the dark about his father's money, and relying on their hunger to hold them with him in a raid. It seemed that Pompeyo too must have kept mum about money, undermining the lad by sneaky sneers and lies. So this fellow's objection was sensible.

But Lorenzo wouldn't give an inch. He scowled at the objector, and his hands slid to his guns. Things might have grown tough. But Dugan, thinking, said:

"Wait a minute. I've got an idea."

And he told them the idea, and they all eased up. Lorenzo suddenly laughed; then seriously said:

"*Por Dios,* it might work! But you, *amigo,* are likely to get shot."

"Well, let's try it," said Dugan.

"*Muy bien,*" said Lorenzo. "*Vamos, hombres!*"

And they rode.

THE guide, who seemed cat-eyed and cat-eared, led, slow and watchful. By the time they reached the bridge it was getting on toward midnight. There the cat-man slid off his horse and disappeared like a shadow. Before long he came back and reported quietly:

"All is still. No lights. No dogs. Ten horses in the corral."

Softly they rode in and surrounded the house. Dark and still, it stood dull in the starshine, with black oblongs of shut doors and wooden windows. Faint whitish stripes of strong bars showed at the windows. Nobody could get in or out except through the two doorways, front and back. And Dugan went, this time to the front, and pulled the same crazy trick.

Slam, slam, slam went his horse's heels against that door. And again, *slam, slam, slam.* A hell of a noise in the quiet, and one that would make any sleeping man wake up savage. Then he ran his horse well into the grove, tied him quick and safe behind a stout tree, and ran back to stand behind another thick butt. It was fast work, and timed just about right.

Wooden windows thumped open, and somebody yelled red-hot language. And Dugan answered back the same way.

"You—" he howled, with plenty of description, "I told you I'd come back. Come out and fight now!"

He got action quick. Guns flashed and banged at his voice, and the tough old tree took a beating. Bullets whacked into it and bark flapped off it and some splinters flew around, and Dugan's baggy pants gave a sudden yank at his left leg. But that just warmed him up.

When the shooting stopped he let out a crazy laugh and really opened up. Dugan never was any Sunday school pet, and the words he used now almost blistered his own throat. And there are some things no boss can take without a fight, if he expects to keep his own men under his thumb afterwards. Dugan gave Lopez the whole works, with some side remarks to his men too. It got them.

Suddenly the door opened and bumped back hard. Lopez, in white pajamas, took one look to left and right, saw nothing but the dim dark trees, and came on the run. His revolver glinted in the starlight, and his teeth grinned like a mad dog's. Behind him some other men came through the doorway, boiling mad too. And Lopez snarled:

"You—" and so on "—show your filthy face, and—"

He reached Dugan's tree, and then—

Crrrack! Lorenzo's bunch, hid on each side, opened fire.

The men behind Lopez stopped short. And again—*crrrack!*

Lopez stood alone, looking off to one side. The tough eggs behind him were busted, down to stay down. And Lorenzo, jumping out of the dark with both hand guns up, was riding at Lopez.

Lopez wheeled and backed, and his gun swung up at Lorenzo. Dugan shot. His bullet took Lopez in the wrist, and the revolver banged off wild. The two-gun kid fired with both hands, but missed. Quick as a snake, Lopez had dropped to a squat. And the lad's bullets nearly got Dugan. One nicked his left ear and stung like a hornet.

"Hey! Quit that!" Dugan yelled. And he jumped at Lopez and smacked him senseless. Just in time, too. Lopez had got his gun in his left fist now and was ready to shoot.

Then came bangs from behind the house. Lorenzo hesitated, scowling down at Lopez, wheeled away and dashed to the new trouble. It wasn't much. A few Lopez men had taken a sneak out the back door and got caught by Lorenzo's lads watching that exit.

Dugan, sticking Lopez' gun under his own belt, stood watching. Voices sounded in the house, and a light began to shine, and shapes moved past the open door. Soon the place was all lit up, and Lorenzo came striding out with three of his men carrying lanterns. They inspected the dead men, found one not dead yet, and knifed him quick. After that they came to Dugan.

Lorenzo gave him one flashing grin, then bent over Lopez, asking:

"Dead?"

"I don't think so," said Dugan. "I cracked him down hard, but his skull sounded thick."

The lad's face set. And he ordered: "Tobal, bring water—and a rope."

A MAN went away fast and came back with a big clay jar and a lasso. He dumped water on Lopez, who gasped, blinked, coughed, sat up—and froze, eyeing the hard faces around him. Then Dugan, looking at the rope, said:

"Not so fast, lad. This man's my prisoner, not yours."

Lorenzo's jaw muscles stood out. And a growl went among his men. They were all there now, with guns still in their fists and fighting temper in their eyes. But Lorenzo kept control.

"That is true, *amigo*," he said. "He belongs to you, if you want him. What will you do with him?"

Dugan didn't answer. And Lorenzo quickly said:

"*Alonso, aquí!* Tell our friend what this Lopez did to your uncle, Julio Aguirre, and his family!"

Alonso, a stocky fellow, stepped forward and, looking Lopez straight in the eye, told a short story. Dugan's been around, and his stomach's pretty tough, but what he heard now made it squirm. And Lopez, squatting, stayed still until Lorenzo snapped:

"Do you deny that, Butcher?"

At that Lopez started up and said: "I acted under orders! And look here, you can't do this to me! You'll be hounded to hell by the army, and—"

"And will that be anything new to us?" Lorenzo broke in. "Shut up! *Amigo*, do you want some more information about this brute! Antonio, come here! Tell us about—"

"Never mind," said Dugan. "I'm going for a walk."

So he walked back among the trees and found his horse and took a ride out in the open. Behind, he heard Lopez start to yell. The noise stopped suddenly, as if something had shut off his breath. And after that Dugan heard nothing but the night wind sweeping across the thin grass.

Along toward moonrise time he headed back toward the house. Then his horse acted queer. It slowed up and kept sniffing the wind. And when the moon came up, something up ahead moved. A man, moving toward the *hacienda*, on a horse nearly worked out. The poor beast was just stumbling along.

Dugan speeded up. The man heard him coming and swung around with a gun up. Dugan drew his own and closed in. Then he pulled up short.

The other rider was Pompeyo. Pompeyo, who'd got a horse somewhere—maybe by shooting the owner—and headed for here, probably to sell out Lorenzo. As far as he knew, Lorenzo was still starving away down southwest. Now, seeing Dugan up here, he sat petrified.

Dugan grinned at him, a slow, hard grin, and started his horse walking in closer. And, looking into Dugan's face and Dugan's .45, Pompeyo went yellow. Instead of fighting, he ducked down behind his horse's neck and tried to sprint away. The horse couldn't make it. He stumbled again and fell flop.

Pompeyo sprawled clear, rolled over, got up and ran as if the devil was after him. Dugan drew a bead on his back, but couldn't finish the job. Dugan's not Spanish.

So Pompeyo got away again. And Dugan unsaddled his poor animal and left it free and rode along. And at the *hacienda* he saw Lopez hanging straight

and still from a thick tree-branch, and a rifleman on guard at the front door, who grinned and passed him in. Only one light was burning now; a soft light in a wide room where Lorenzo sat in a big chair, alone and sober-faced.

"The beasts!" he said. "They have destroyed all my family portraits and turned this place into a dirty pig-pen. But—" he drew a deep breath "—perhaps it is better so. I could never live here again. More of the governor's murderers would soon be on us, and—"

There he tightened up, saying:

"So we ride again. Will you come with us, *amigo?*"

"Where?" asked Dugan.

"Over the border into Colombia," Lorenzo explained. "My life here in Venezuela is dead."

Dugan smiled and said:

"No, lad. I'm traveling north."

Lorenzo walked into a dark room and came out with small bag. Small but heavy. A bag of gold. He'd found what he had come here for, and this was only a little part of it. He handed it to Dugan.

Dugan gave him one straight look and opened it; took out one gold *morrocota,* and dropped it into his pocket; tied up the bag and tossed it away. It went *clink* on the floor, and that was that. They were right back where they'd started.

"Now," said Dugan, "if I could have something to eat, I'll move out."

He got it quick. Packs of food were already made up for the little gang to throw on their horses at sunrise; and the sentry outside loaded Dugan's animal *pronto.* Before daybreak he was gone.

GONE, with a handshake to Lorenzo and no words. There was nothing to talk about. The job was done, and the starved boy of yesterday was a young man today, and very well able to handle his own life. And to his gang Dugan was only a big bruiser who'd drifted in and been used and let out again. Which was just as Dugan wanted it.

So, cruising along alone in the next sunrise, he was contented. And there, mister, is some local color for you, if you know how to use it. And—

Pablo, fill them up again. *Pero,* you don't have to come over here till I—

Qué? The guy that bit my hand is dead? Broke his skull on the cobbles when I cracked him down? Oh, *hombre!* After all this time, Pompeyo had to bump into me again up here and—

Qué dice? What say, Pablo? The police? Oh, *sí,* I see. Got that panel in the back-room wall open? And the tunnel's all clear? *Bueno!*

Good night, Mr. Paleface. I have to go help a friend of mine out of a jam.

Statement of ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of March 3, 1933, of Adventure, published monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1938. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Harold S. Goldsmith, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Adventure and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. Editor, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner, and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. Harold S. Goldsmith. Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 10th day of October, 1938. Eva M. Walker, Notary Public, New York County Clerk's No. 20, Register's No. 0-W-49. (My commission expires March 30, 1940.) [Seal]—Form 3526—Ed. 1933.

"This is the end of all roads!"

BLACKCOCK'S FEATHER

Conclusion

By MAURICE WALSH

THIS is the story of me, David Gordon, and it begins on the day I landed in Dublin Town in Ireland to search for my dead mother's kin.

Half Scotch, half Irish as I was, I had no trouble picking my side in the war that was raging between the English and the Irish, although Sir Francis Vaughan, a valued servant of Queen Elizabeth, had tried to enlist me into his invading band. I had no mind to do sword work for a ruler who had sent Mary of Scotland to her death.

I was soon to learn the temper of these

bullying invaders—and the short shift they gave to enemies. Colum O'More, a true man and a fearless one, I saw slain brutally and without warning by Captain Cosby of the Englishers. From that day my course was set. For I drew sword to avenge my friend and only a hard ride to the Ulster border saved my skin.

My next of kin, Donal O'Cahan, was at Dungiven. With a true Gaelic stubbornness, he had managed to get himself betrothed to an Englisher's daughter, and the fact that her father forbade the match mattered not at all.

The lady was willing, so one dark night a handful of us took to saddle and caught the Englishers as they were taking the girl away. It was a good fight while it lasted, but when it was finished Donal had won himself a bride, and dead Englishmen sprawled on the Galway road.

It was every man for himself then. We were in hostile country, many days' riding from our clan, and discovery meant death. Donal made the wise decision that we should try to win through in scattered pairs in order to avoid discovery.

Father Senan, an old friar, was my companion on that wild dash for sanctuary, and in truth I had full need of his prayers. For Captain Cosby surprised us a short distance from Galway and we escaped only by kidnaping Cosby's fiancée, stealing her boat and gaining the Corrib shore barely in time to hide.

Not until we reached land did I understand the full extent of our danger. For the girl we had abducted was Eithne O'Flaherty, daughter of Queen's Captain Dame Bevinda O'Flaherty, one of the most powerful neutral commanders in all Ireland, and we were landed in the very middle of her domains.

Angry as she was, the girl Eithne held our lives in her hands that day, and for some woman's reason decided to be merciful. She hid us in a hunter's cabin well within the Corrib forest, where we stayed hidden until the hue and cry died down.

Three weeks it took. Weeks in which Eithne and I saw a lot of each other. I am no ladies' man, and I knew she was pledged to another—a man I had sworn to kill. But when the time came for Father Senan and I to take leave of that place, I knew that some day, if I lived, I would come back to claim her and she would not be unwilling.

We won through to Dungiven, the last of that straggling squadron, only to find new trouble brewing. The truce had been broken, and we had the English penned sorely near the Falls of Assaroe. But not for long. In a desperate running fight from Saimor to the gates of Sligo, the hard-dying outlanders made their bid to escape, and I was in at the kill.

And a sore mistake it was. For, penned in walled Sligo with a lost detachment in the van of the attackers, I and a bare score fighters faced a town crazed with anger with no quarter asked or expected. It ended with many a good comrade dead—and for me, imprisonment or worse, at the hands of Sir Francis Vaughan.

CHAPTER XX

CITY OF FOES

THE half-town of Athenree was a medley of stone, wood, and wattled houses, straggling within four stone walls, and garrisoned by four Sassenach standards, as well as by some clan levies from Dunkellin and Clanricard. The road from Athlone came in below the castle at one side, and the road to Galway ran out between barbicans at the other. It was the main loyalist stronghold south of Cong, but its governor, Sir Francis Vaughan, had few good words to say of its security.

"This fort of Athenree," said he, "is proof against attack on all sides save that on which we look for it; this sunken north wall would tempt a beldam to launch a sally at it."

He, Donn Maguire and I were leaning on the shelter-parapet, looking across the pasture grounds to the distant woods.

"It is well masked," said Donn, "with your barbican and corner towers commanding it."

"And a fine deep ditch," said I.

"Aye! a dry ditch easy enough to fill. If O'Donnell brought half a grove of mangonels and a couple of testudos—"

Donn laughed. "The red lad does not crawl on his belly with such engines."

"No, but, nevertheless, I will mount six culverins between tower and barbican. I respect the fighting qualities of your red lad."

"Where in all the world," wondered Donn ironically, "did you find cause to say that?" And the three of us laughed.

"David Gordon, here, will bear me out that once I warned him that this was no land for fortune seekers, but for blows aplenty," Vaughan upheld himself. "And yet at that time I was not so sure about the blows. That sometimes-fickle queen of mine sent me over, saying: 'Francis, show you my rebel Irish how this game of war is played in the Lowlands.' And over came I, thinking it but poor sport to chase half-naked Irishry from bog to bog. But mark you, they were no wiser in Dublin town."

" 'Tis the man afraid belittles his enmies," said Donn.

"Well said, Maguire! When I got back by the Gap of the North from Portmore my brother-in-law, de Burgh, had a new task for me. Said he: 'Take these despatches to Clifford at Athlone, and rouse him to action. Body of me! to think that the terror of the Spanish Main is letting the young O'Donnell and his kerns threaten our border. Press him to follow the instructions here writ and we will meet at Dungannon within a month.' So I rode across to Athlone, hoping for a slash at Wat Tyrrell on the way."

"Lucky for you you did not meet him or O'Conner," put in Donn.

"Like enough. But I was told that a steel coat struck terror into the wild Irish in their saffron, and, not meeting any, I thought that was truth. I remember how Conyers Clifford smiled, reading his orders. 'We shall see, we shall see,' was all he said. And up we marched to Sligo, two thousand of us, sure that no force in the north could withstand us. We were all eagerness to cross the Erne, and there was my calm, steel-gray Clifford hanging back in Sligo till Clanricard and O'Connor Roe brought up their levies. 'Conyers, let us on,' I pressed him, 'or de Burgh will tire waiting for us at Dungannon.' He laughed at me. 'At Dungannon,' said he, eyebrow lifted, 'there is a keen gentleman named O'Neill, as de Burgh will find out—and over here is a red lad O'Donnell that, some day, I hope to see the heels of—next week, I pray.' And in a week we marched—and in the night too, like Welsh border raiders, whereat we cursed Clifford most heartily. Could we not take Bellashanny in a fine afternoon, smite O'Donnell hip and thigh within a week, in a fortnight be down on O'Neill's rear and drive him into de Burgh's net?—and there was a neat finish to the business. Ye know what befell then."

"Stout fellows!" commended Donn. "Better fighting I never saw."

"The only thing left to do. Myself never thought to come out of that trap, till our tough buccaneer found a road for us. But I am no longer a fool." Vaughan placed a hand on my shoulder. "Where do these terrible fighting men come out of, David Gordon? I have ridden this island north and west, and it is all a wilderness—woods and marshes and bare hills, and clay hamlets hidden in corners, and ragged peasants walking after the tail of black oxen; yet we send trained troops into that wilderness and they come out not at all, or they come out broken. Where come the smiters from?"

"From the soil," said I, "wherefrom all fighting men come."

Maguire clapped Vaughan's shoulder in his impulsive way.

"If ever England beats us," he cried, "it is men like you and Clifford will do it."

"England will beat you in the end, Maguire," said Vaughan confidently.

"In the end!" I wondered. "Where is the end?"

"Let that be. But I know that if I face O'Donnell again, ye will see me with an advance guard, a rear guard, a strong reserve, and an open road behind."

"We will not see any of these things, jailer," put in Donn, laughing ruefully. "You keep the devil's own grip on us."

And that was plain truth. Maguire and I had confidently looked forward to an escape on the march down from

Sligo, but Vaughan had kept us under such strict guard that we never got the faintest chance.

Tadg Ironhand with his wound he had bestowed in a safe place in Sligo out of Dunkellin's reach, and of him no word had reached us, though we learned later that he had made good his escape.

Now we had been three weeks in Athenree, and Vaughan's grip was surer than ever. He had treated us fairly and very wisely. He had taken us down to the dungeons of the keep and chosen the best one for us, one of the few that had light from outside. It had a stone floor and stone walls, and a stone arch for a roof, an iron-clamped door, and a barred slit of window level with the fosse. And outside the door was a dark stone passage and stone steps leading up to the main guard, with another strong door at the head of them.

"Ye are dangerous men," he told us, "and I will hold ye with might and main!"

"My soul to perdition! but you will so," said Donn sadly, looking round him in the gray light.

"Ye can have these quarters," went on Vaughan, "or ye can pass me word of honor."

"What is that?" asked Donn eagerly.

"It is this, and I pray you to accept it: plight me word that for one week ye will not seek to escape, and at the end of that time renew if ye see fit. Meantime, you will have full freedom within Athenree, and without the walls if accompanied by me or an officer deputed."

"My fine hero!" cried Donn heartily. "I plight my honor this minute."

It was the only thing to do at that time. There was no hope, yet, of an invasion out of the north, and there would be no heroism in immuring ourselves in a stone cell. And now for three weeks we had renewed our word, and we had nothing whereof to complain. Sir Francis was doubly kind. Wishful to give us as much freedom as was possible, he did not quarter us in the castle, where the hours were disciplined, but lodged us in a wooden-joisted house below his doubtful north wall. In this he showed his trust, for in the rear of the house was a drying-green sloping up to the glacis, and to escape any dark night we had only to risk a ten-foot drop into the dry ditch. In these quarters we were wholly free, and our landlady, a woman out of Wales, widow of a camp-surgeon, was careful of our needs and our comfort.

DONCADH DONN MAGGUIRE, always gay of heart, was enjoying life to the full, and, indeed, but for a certain irk of mind, I too had no cause to complain. Donn's father, the great old Hugh Maguire, was ever a stern and serious man, and had never yielded anything but reprimand and restraint to his son's levity of spirit, but now the lad was free, though I kept some sort of hold on him, and he found congenial companions amongst the garrison officers. These were of the new train bands, young fellows all, not yet soured by war, coming mostly from the wide country of Devon, and so in habit of mind and pursuit of sport very kin to the Irish without the Pale. Donn knew the English tongue, and had been to England in O'Neill's train, and so was at home amongst them. He was to be found in their quarters most of his waking hours. He threw them at dice; he matched them at rapier foil; borrowed a horse and went hunting and racing with them; bought, borrowed, or stole a gamecock of high breed, and fought mains all over south Galway as far as the Clare passes—and was rival with them for the favor of the few ladies in the garrison.

I was of the quieter breed and not made for easy friendships. That ugly, set face of mine was against that, as well as the reputation that rumor had falsely tied on me. The young fellows shied away and held me in something like awe. Some of them had seen the quarrel in the "Pied Horse" in Dublin; all had heard exaggeratedly of the raid on Rickard the Sassenach; two or three had been at the harrying of myself and Father Senan at Corrib; and the fight

in Sligo gate-tower was known to all.

With only two of the English officers was I actually on easy terms. One was Vaughan himself, a sterling man, who improved on acquaintance. He had seen life in camp and court, and could sail in all winds. A keen, satiric man, veiling a strong core. My habit was to visit him at the castle in the forenoon, take a cup of wine with him, and listen to his talk of three courts—wild tales sometimes; and on occasion he visited us in our quarters.

The other was Ned Billing, Captain of the North Gate, a ruddy, grizzle-headed veteran, very fond of a dry French wine, and an expert in the chase. He had spent so many years in Connacht that he was grown Irish in habit and very largely in sympathy. He was one of the few English that spoke Gaelic fluently. "Old am I for changing," he told me, "and stiff in the bone for night work, or with Wat Tyrrell I might be." This Walter Tyrrell was an Englishman, and a very notable leader of forays on the Irish side.

Ned was indeed a great lover of the chase, and had himself bred two fine hounds named Satan and Urith Ban. He knew every covert from Suck to Oranmore, and was not guiltless of running another man's stag—as I found out in our expeditions into Dunkellin woods.

I WAS having supper with Vaughan in the upper hall when he broached his subject. He leaned back in his chair and yawned. "I am tired of this Athenree," he said.

"I was tired four weeks ago."

"You luck will better itself, mayhap. Never a blade is out in all Connacht, and what your northern smiters are at I know not. Conyers Clifford would seem to have forgotten me—not a word from Athlone these ten days. So will I forget him. Know what I am doing day after tomorrow?"

"Coming out with Ned Billing to kill Clanricard's deer."

"No. I am riding into Galway to see Dick Bingham. Care to ride with me?"

"If I might."

"Bingham is starting his Wednesday receptions," he said, giving me a careless shrewd eye. "It might be worth while looking over his Spanish-blooded beauties."

He kept watching me out of the side of an eye, and I looked at my plate.

"There is dark-haired, rose-cheeked beauty from the head of Corrib that I would like to see again. Belike, she will be there—with her mother and long Cosby."

I made no remark.

"You know her, I think?"

"Do I?"

"The last time I saw you with her you had a right hearty grip of the maid. A hot-spirited beauty, and noble too. You must have spoken her fairly while crossing Corrib?"

"The old priest did."

"Yet it was your deeds she boasted. She knew so many aspects of your exploit that, I think, for a whole week I could have put hand on you."

"I know that, Sir Francis."

"It was no affair of mine. Well, we may renew our acquaintance tomorrow. But as regards Cosby—" He looked his question.

"I am done with him, unless he forces me."

"I will see that he does not." He got up from the table to snuff a tall candle, and spoke carelessly. "It might be that you will best him in another fashion. And, by the way, if you have a spare doublet—"

"Donn Maguire will buy me one in the square."

"Shall we take him?"

"That—or the dungeon."

"He is good company. I shall be ready after dinner-hour."

SHORTLY after noon—a wonderful warm day for the last week of September—Donn and I, freshly arrayed, were about to set out for the castle, when Tom Pybus, Vaughan's body servant, came clumping to our door. A queer dumb fellow, this big trooper. Here in Athenree he had always avoided me, and if ever I caught his pale blue eye there was something sheepish and abashed in it. That I could understand.

I had treated him roughly and something contemptuously, and no soldier could forget such treatment.

Now he was excited in a lowering sort of way, and saluted us stiffly as he came into our quarters.

"The governor's compliments," he said. "He is not riding into Galway today."

Don swore a great Gaelic oath.

"My master bade me say that he will call on you later," said Pybus, and strode out of the room.

"Messages from Athlone?" I called after him.

He turned. "Yes, sir."

"Any news?"

He hesitated. "There is a rumor—"

"Out with it, Thomaus, old dog-face," cried Donn.

"Fighting with O'Neill near Armagh—"

"My soul! and ye running."

"It is said the rebels beat the Lord de Burgh in two fights."

Donn's hand came clump on the table. "And what else would the rebels be doing, blast you? And the Maguires would be there too, by the High God!"

Pybus strode away, and Donn made for the door.

"Where to?" I called.

"To get the news at first hand." He spoke over his shoulder, his eyes flashing. Then he stopped, and came slowly back to the table where I was sitting.

"Remember we are prisoners here, Maguire," I said.

He sat down heavily. "Do I not know that now? And, David Gordon, it is only now that I know it. God! Think of what we are missing."

After a silence he spoke musingly. "But they are nice boys, the Sassenach, and—you are right, sober fellow—one should not go cocking bonnet among them in the time of their bad news. Hard words there might be, and I might have to stick one—or maybe two of them—through the gizzard. Let us be waiting awhile!" He got up suddenly and paced up and down the room. "That dungeon! That dungeon! It is like a stone coffin to get out of."

"One of us inside and the other outside—"

"By the great wind! A bright thought! My fine man! You could be getting down in the ditch and pulling a bar out of the grid."

"The grid is too narrow. A friendly fellow like you might bribe a jailer on the outside."

"The best way to bribe one of these is to clout him over the head, and devil the hardier fellow than yourself—"

"And my head on a pike a short time after."

And all afternoon we discussed and rediscussed, half in play, half in earnest, our chances of escape. In the end we decided that if O'Donnell came south of the Cong line one of us would lodge in the dungeon, while the other, from the outside, must seek by guile or force to effect a rescue.

"Vaughan is wise and wily," said Donn doubtfully, "and will see what is in our mind. Like enough he will pop you in to keep me company."

And so the discussion circled round once more.

IT WAS evening when Vaughan came to see us. He was wearing military dress, and his face was set to hide his thoughts. I pulled a chair in for him without a word, and he sat, his arms on the board, while Donn filled out a stoup of wine and moved it before him.

He took it and smiled to us.

"Your good health, my enemies!" he said, and emptied it at a draught. "I thank you for your nice sensibility today."

"Bad news, Sir Francis?" I put to him.

"Bad news, indeed." His voice was quiet. "But good news ye would call it, and ye may. Your O'Neill and O'Donnell have given us another lesson in strategy, and a double stroke to drive it home."

Across the table I saw the light leap in Maguire's eyes, and his yellow mane seemed to lift. Yet he said no word, and did no more than move the flagon in front of Vaughan.

Vaughan helped himself, and looked at me. "Last night I made complaint that Clifford had forgotten me, and at

the time his rider was on the way. I would that he had forgotten me a little longer or had better news. Ye are eager to know?"

"What you are pleased to tell."

"Not pleased, my friends. But I will tell ye, as Clifford has written. Ye are aware that the lord deputy's design was to strike from Connacht and through the Gap-of-the-North by Armagh. Ye know what befell the first stroke—and the second was no luckier. At the very beginning young Trimblestown and a thousand men were cut to pieces at a bog-pass in upper Meath by Tyrrell and O'Connor."

"That is the way the two have," murmured Donn.

"But the main attack on O'Neill was under de Burgh himself. He rebuilt the fort of Portmore, and tried to wile O'Neill into the open out of his strong places round Dungannon. O'Neill gave wile for wile. He kept his main force masked, and set his horse and light-armed men to watch and harry the Queen's forces. Both leaders were playing for time: O'Neill waiting to hear from O'Donnell before risking open fight, and de Burgh waiting for Clifford's flanking movement before he drove O'Neill into the trap. And then came Clifford's failure, and O'Donnell with a picked force came hastening to his ally. After that was no more biding time. De Burgh found himself face to face, for the first time, with heavy-armed soldiers—gallowglasses, you call them—and men trained to the arquebus. Twice he essayed fight, and twice was he beaten, and now the remnants of his force are scattered from Dundalk to Dublin, and Portmore is close beleaguered by the north. That is the tale."

"It was great fighting," said Donn, a muscle twitching in his cheek.

"The north has given us a big debt to repay," said Vaughan. But there is something that cannot be restored to us. William de Burgh, who was husband to my sister, was sore wounded at Drumflich, and this day lies under the sod at Armagh."

"It is good to die in war," said Donn. "God rest him."

"Amen," said I.

"He was a good soldier," said Vaughan, "and honest—no courtier but believed men as they spoke. A malison on the ruffling boasters of Dublin! They made him belittle his enemy, and stayed safe within walls while he went out to die."

A silence followed. We all sat thinking our own thoughts, and these in time came to the same groove.

"I am sorry," said Vaughan, "but I must hold you."

"The devil's tight hold too," said Donn chagrinedly.

"And our intended ride to Galway must be postponed for many weeks."

"That does not matter."

"I fear that a dull time is before you—but, belike, a right lively one for us. Crawford is taking no risks. He assumes that O'Donnell will make a descent on Connacht before winter. If he breaks the Sligo line there is nothing to hold him between there and here, and it is here that we shall hold him—Galway, Athlone, Athenree. I pray God that he will venture so far."

"If Hugh Roe comes," said Donn slowly, "you will, maybe, not thank God for answering your prayer."

Vaughan laughed for the first time.

"At least we shall welcome him warmly," he said, and turned to me. "Cong and Tuan are being abandoned, and we are to be strengthened by the Cong garrison."

He looked from one to the other of us. "I can trust you two soldiers not to quarrel with the new men?"

"Faith no!" Donn promised. "If the clans come south of Cong we will take to your dungeon and bribe your jailer."

He nodded understanding. "Until then I pray you to leave things as they are. There is no need to immure yourselves within walls, for I assure you that escape is impossible."

We left it at that for the time.

IT WAS on a dank afternoon in October that the reenforcements from Cong arrived.

At the time I happened to be alone on the sunken north wall in the rear of our quarters. There was a moist feel in the air and a thin mist

hung low over the sweep of plain that I could see over the head of the slope outside the wall. I was gazing idly over the gray level, dotted with kine and, here and there, a spear-armed herdsman on a rough garran, when the long line of the Cong garrison crawled out of the woods on to the north road: first a troop of horse, then a column of foot, a disorderly array of townspeople, a medley of ox-drawn wagons, a park of culverin one behind the other, more ordered foot, and the rear brought up by another troop of horse. They crawled slowly across the plain, and I watched with some interest until the bastion hid them from my eyes. Then I went down to my quarters, and, in tune with the dull weather, speculated dispiritedly on the future. We were doomed to be prisoners within these walls for how long? A throw of dice, a main of cocks, a scraping of foils—boys' playthings! A little hunting, it might be! but no adventuring to Galway. Nothing but idling amongst soldierly enemies, with a careful watch on tongue and manner, while Sir Francis Vaughan prepared a warm reception for our friends. Was there nothing we could do? Nothing!

Donn was slow in getting back from his usual visit to the castle, and I think I dozed for a while and dreamed that I was deep underground with some one knocking over my head.

It was Tom Pybus at the door. It was evening then, and I was hungry. I cursed Donn before calling Pybus to come in.

"Sir Francis begs your presence at the castle, sir," he told me.

"Was that the Cong garrison?"

"Yes, master, and Cong town with it."

I thought I understood Vaughan's message. He wanted me to meet Cosby in his presence, and make sure that no sword-work would ensue. There was no danger of that now—on my part—but Vaughan had better have his surety. I donned my best tunic, smoothed out my blackcock's feather, left sword and sgian behind, and followed Pybus. As I slanted through the square at the heart of the town, the Cong garrison was taking up quarters in the wooden shelters that Vaughan had hastily built for it.

There was a group of officers round the peat and bog-pine fire in the great hall of the Castle—some, my acquaintances of the garrison, others of the newly-arrived force—and the scullions were laying the table for supper.

Ned Billing of the north gate called to me down the length of the hall as I strode towards the turret stairs, and I waited for him.

"Blazes!" cried he, "but we have the full house, and some of the sweetest maidens in Connacht. Come away up and look at them."

"Old fool!" said I.

"Not me. But look you, the mind is at me to cut the yellow head off young Maguire."

"What has he done?"

"A little friend of mine—Duvesa MacTheobald, who else?—and he already whispering in her ear. Son, the loveliest dove hair—"

"Bah!" I cried, "a finger-snap for your dove hair."

"Surely, surely! There is a head of black curls would suit me just as well."

And to this day I wonder why my heart was not dunting in my side.

I pulled aside the curtain at the stairhead and stepped into the upper hall. It was finely lit with new, heavy waxen candles, and the tapestry stirred gently in some draught of air.

About the cavernous fireplace were scattered fully a score of people, men and ladies. Donn Maguire was there for sure, and Vaughan, and big Cosby with his upright head and light hair, and talking to a tall dame whose back was turned.

And facing me down the length of the hall was Eithne, the lady of my dreams.

I STOPPED for a single instant and my heart gave an empty leap. And then my feet took me up the hall. There was nothing else they could do. Easy, now, easy, David Gordon! Your ugly hatchet face is a fine shield, and many eyes will be looking at you. Take your cap in your hand, and you will be getting through this somehow.

I walked directly to Vaughan. "Your pleasure, Governor?" said I.

"You were slow in coming, David," he greeted me, with easy familiarity.

The tall dame turned. She was Dame Bevinda O'Flaherty, that noble lady—the long chin, the long nose, and the strong deep eyes under the brow.

"Captain Dame Bevinda," introduced Vaughan, "let me present David Gordon."

Her eyes held mine, and she gave me her hand frankly. "Ah! Blackcock's Feather," she said, and smiled. "Connacht has heard of you, and Connacht has been unkind to you."

"Not always, Dame," said I, bowing deeply.

"And this is the Lady Eithne," went on Vaughan.

Alas! we were far away from the Glen of the Echo and the mood that was easy on us then. Our eyes met. She curtsied, and I bowed. That was all. But while there was a flush of warmth on her cheeks there was an odd transparent pallor as of excitement about her mouth, and her dark eyes shone deeply under the lovely dark curve of her brows.

Vaughan put his hand on my arm and kept it there.

"Captain Cosby," he said, "this is my friend, David Gordon."

We stood up to our full heights and looked at each other. He was tall as I was, and his eyes, that used to be bosses of pale stone, were now yellow like a lion's.

This was my enemy. I knew that now. More than that, I was his deadly enemy. I knew that too. Vaughan was wise in bringing us together in this company, for if I had met Cosby anywhere else my hand would have sought hilt at a whisper.

"I have met Captain Cosby," said I, and could not bend my stiff neck.

"And will again, by the devil's grace," he said in his strong voice, his head upright and his neck like a pillar below his powerful jaw.

"Which side his majesty?" said Vaughan. And then quickly, "But let that be, gentlemen."

"At your service, Governor," said Cosby. "He is your prisoner."

He turned his shoulder to me and spoke to Eithne, and I saw her shoulders lift in a long breath of relief.

Dame Bevinda was now speaking to Vaughan. It seemed that he had placed his upper chambers at the disposal of the dame and her party, and she was insisting that they must keep the disciplined hours of the castle. She asked him the supper hour, and he told her seven of the clock.

"A proper time," she commented. "If we might, we will go to my woman, Breadh, till then." She turned to me again and smiled. "There will be great talking between you and me, Master Gordon."

Vaughan and Cosby accompanied them to the turret stairs. Eithne gave me one quick look and one quick smile, and that was all. No word had passed between us that used to talk so freely. A great strangeness had come down upon us, and our old mood seemed gone beyond recalling.

I WAS alone on the floor, and here and there curious eyes were on me. I looked round for Donn. There he was, under a wall light, Ned Billing and himself making talk and laughter with a bonny fair-haired woman. I went towards them.

Donn caught my arm.

"Lady Duvesa MacTheobald," he introduced. And to the lady, "This is David Gordon of the blackcock's feather you wanted to meet, Lady Duvesa." The lady's merry gray black-lashed eyes went over me closely, and I hoped that, having had their fill of my dour face, they would need no more.

"I am glad to meet the great David Gordon," she said in her silver tinkling voice. "All Connacht speaks of him and his feather."

"He did his share," said Donn, "when he was well watched."

"And I hear that he can make pretty speeches too."

"Mother o' God!" cried Donn in surprise. "Whoever heard him make one?"

"He had much practice by Corrib shore," said she, her eyes looking at me under lashes.

We found a seat well below the salt, and Ned hunched over a great round of beef and carved for both of us.

"One good thing," said he, "this alarm of war has given us the pick of the beeves of Hymany—besides the darling ones."

"Beef for me."

"I saw you being presented to the lovely Eithne."

"You know her?"

"Know her! With all Connacht I respect the mother and love the daughter. Let me be thinking now, of all the times I laid my heart at her feet only this last winter. But where the good? She but made play with me, so I turned to fair-hair—and look! here am I carving beef for an Albannach gallowglass-leader while fair-hair listens to an addle-pated Eireannach with a yellow mane."

"Try raven locks again."

"That I will. Though bluff Cosby has the pull of me there." He looked up the table and grew serious. "The shame of hell to see her wasted on that chuff! I suspect the mother. A wise lady, that Bevinda, for all her boldness. Note you that she draws no steel in this war. Your Red Hugh, in his swoops, gets no stable hold on Connacht, and until he does she leans to the power that leaves Cashleanna-Kirka an unburned roof. But she is Irish at heart, and not ill-pleased to see us Sassenach get our belly-full of hard knocks. You will be knowing why she chose Athenree instead of Galway as winter quarters?"

"I do not."

"Because Cosby is here. The maid and he are plighted, and the wedding is to be here on All Saints'."

So that was it.

I looked up the length of the table. Her beauty under her black hair was like a light. No longer now was she demure, but talking lightsomely with Vaughan. And Vaughan himself was changed, with a gallant flash in his eye and a touch of color in his face. Cosby at the other side was busy with his platter. He took no part in the word-bandying, but ate his super stolidly, as much as if saying, "Let the maid talk! I have her leashed." My gaze was still on her musingly, when she glanced down the table, and our eyes locked. She looked at me long and steadily, a keen look with something puzzled in it, and something wistful, and something else that I could not define. My under-browed look at last made her eyes waver and sink.

"The little rogue! The little rogue!" chuckled Billing. "Did you get yon? The woman's wiles of her, letting the eye drop shyly and swithering the heart of you. With that shy trick she won all the hearts in Galway last winter. Amy of Dunkelin—that ye robbers stole from us—and herself shared the palm at the governor's courts. Even plain old Dick Bingham shaved his chin in the Eireannach fashion to please her. But she was not to be captured. She played us deftly, one against the other, winning hearts and reserving favor; spurning the too bold, encouraging the shy, tempering the despair of the fallen. Faith! I know the whole gamut. Was I not through it?—and will again, by Jupiter!"

"You forget Cosby."

"Beelzebub's bowels! but I did. She is no longer the free maid. The false step she has taken. After playing aye so gently and kindly with our hearts she has yielded her own to as blustering a boor as ever crossed the Irish Sea—even if he is lord of a baron's hall in Derby. But mark you, Davy boy, I suspect the mother and her liking for that safe baronial hall in middle England."

After that I did not pay much heed to the veteran's babbling.

I WENT across the square, where a big campfire blazed before the wooden shielings, and down East Lane to our quarters below the north wall. But I did not stay indoors. I stumbled across the slope of drying-green at the rear and from there climbed on the wall. The sentinel, coming down towards me, challenged loudly, but knew my voice in reply, and paced back towards the corner bastion.

I leaned my elbows on the shelter-wall and looked across the night. It was black and quiet, and a jack o' lanthorn flickered and jumped in the

marshes beyond the Galway road. Eastwards of the bastion the night fires of the kerns made a yellow glow, and no sound came out of the darkness other than small puffs of air sighing fitfully over the grass.

A fool and a dreamer! These were David Gordon. I had been living on dreams many a week, and now I knew their emptiness. Because a maid had saved my life by Corrib and treated me with a great kindness I had built a bower for her—and she had many bowers to chose from, and was not like to choose mine. After all, I was myself to blame. I was only an adventurer flying for life, and for me she had done a fine thing finely. All the rest was in my own fancy. Ah well! I was used to disappointment. And I had no cause to complain. Since coming to this Ireland, life had moved for me, and would keep moving, God willing. This imprisonment would not last forever, and already my name was known. A home and life waited me at Dungiven or at Derry Columcill. But, dear God! I was lonely—lonely. . . . And she had said that she would be lonely too. . . . And that would pass. Be not sorry for yourself. I threw up head and laughed. And a voice below hailed me.

"My gay fellow! Who have you up there in the dark?" It was Donn. "There's a man in the house looking for you."

I knew who that man was. I scrambled down into the drying-green at Donn's side. "You are late home."

"Late! Sure it is no hour at all, but that old fire-brand, Bevinda of the O'Flaherty, took the ladies off under her wing. Tell me, my long boy, did Donal Ballagh ever say a word about the lovely Duvesa MacTheobald?"

"He did not."

"I always knew that fellow had no eyes in his head."

"He had, for one of the two finest in Connacht."

"Let that stand. I know the first."

"Maybe you do," said I.

The man I saw leaning on the table in the wavering light of the candle within our room was Cathal O'Dwyer of the Glens.

"You are welcome, Cathal O'Dwyer," I greeted him.

"Am I, David Gordon?" he asked wistfully.

IN THE Glen of the Echo, Cathal, recovering from his wound, had been in weakly health, but, now that his wound was healed, a more terrible blight had fallen on him. He was thin and haggard, his shoulders fallen in and an angry red flush high upon his cheekbones.

"Is Garrodh here with you?" I asked him.

"He is not. I came in with the O'Flaherty tail."

"And your lodging?"

He hesitated. "The kerns are kind."

"But I, your brother, should be kinder. There is an airy attic up under the roof, and out in our green you will get all the sun that is going."

He demurred faintly, and I kept patting his shoulder. I was woefully grieved for this, my friend. There was a terrible fatal light in his eyes that I could have wept to see. Donn poured him out a fine mether of wine, and he drank it slowly and daintily. And then Donn, with an excuse, left us. He knew O'Dwyer's story.

"God is good," said O'Dwyer. "The fine friends one meets when the need is the sorest—finer than I deserve."

"What you deserve from me," I comforted him, "is everything. You and your foster-brother, God rest him, set my feet on a man's road."

"And it brought you here?"

"And will lead again from here. And here, too, there may be work for me."

He looked at me closely.

"There may be, surely." He threw his hands wide. "But look at me," he said, "and the strength gone from me—a blast on me—and my work undone."

"Is it still on you?"

"I cannot help it. Mark you, David Gordon, it is easy enough to kill Cosby the Killer. A throw of spear or pull of bow and it is done. But I want to see him face to face and see the knowledge of doom in his eyes. And I am only a withered branch—a withered

branch." He looked long at me. "I know," he said. "I know. I will not put it on you, my friend."

I looked on the ground and spoke between my teeth.

"Whatever you put on me," I said, "I will do it before the face of God."

"Then I can rest," he said.

And I knew if Cosby killed this man I would pursue Cosby to the gates of hell.

Why must I hate Cosby so?

CHAPTER XXI

FOES IN LEASH

NEXT morning, after breakfast, I took Cathal into the drying green, where the sun was warm, and there I left him, wrapped in his long cloak. When I got back to our room, Donn Maguire had disappeared. Myself slung on shoulder-sash, and, instead of Andrea Ferrara, thrust black-sgian at hip. Carefully I brushed bonnet and reset feather, and, throwing short day-cloak on shoulder, made my way towards the castle, where the renewal of my word was due to the governor.

Crossing the square, I saw Cosby directing the completion of the wooden shelters for his men. He saw me, too, and strutted across boldly, his basnet set jauntily on his upright head. He faced in front of me, and I had, perforce, to halt.

"Gordon," said he, his face cold stone, "we are ill friends, and will remain so."

"Ill friends, no!" said I. "I am your enemy."

He sneered his cheerless grin. "My enemy! A rebel hired-fighting-man! If Sir Francis Vaughan, who governs here, had not forbidden it, I might show you how we chastise rebels. But there is one warning I will give you: presume not on your acquaintance with the Lady Eithne O'Flaherty."

"I am on my way to thank her," said I, "for once saving my life."

His eyes yellowed. "You had better move carefully."

"I will be very careful."

For a moment he forbore my eye, and then, swinging on his heel, stalked away.

The great hall of the castle was empty, except for the halberdmen on guard. The sergeant told me that the governor was in the town, and, on this, I ventured to the upper private hall, where I found a middle-aged tire-woman building birch logs about a new-lit fire. She was a stranger to me.

"A terrible thing," said I into the air, "to waste the fine morning at the sleeping."

"Is that the way, tall young hero?" said she, merrily aware of my meaning. "The young ones are about this hour and more, and maybe could be found for the looking."

"I came to see the governor," I told her, "and will wait for him on the east wall."

"It is a good place to be at the waiting, surely," said she pleasantly.

At the left of the hall was a door giving on the east wall, a favorite exercise ground of Vaughan's and mine. I lifted the latch and stepped out, and there was Eithne herself, strolling down towards the bastion at the corner. She was not alone. Duvesa MacTheobald was with her, and on that maiden's left hand, on the edge of the glacis, strutted the bold Doncadh Donn Maguire. Their backs were to me, and I was minded to slink back within the doorway before they turned. But I hesitated too long, and they swung round at the corner and saw me. So I walked up the wall with something of the pikeman in my parade. And, with a pang, memory recalled the quiet Glen of the Echo, and the days I used to go down to meet a maid at Echo-point.

It was a rare morning, with a high clear sky full of austere autumn sun, and a clean breeze out of the west. And this young lass, walking straight and lissome in the sun, with a black curl blown across her brow, was born of the sun and the wind. She welcomed me with a smile, a warm, somehow half-shy, half-mocking smile, her head a little bent and her eyes looking at me from under her bent brows. Donn and his lady welcomed me too, but not so much for my company as for my convenience.

"I was telling the ladies," Donn cried, "that this was our favorite stroll of a

morning and that we would maybe not permit them to share it."

It was Vaughan's and my exercise ground, not Donn's, but I let it go.

"This morning we will take, then," cried Eithne. Frankly she came to me and took my arm. "I want to talk to you, David Gordon," she said. "Be off, young ones!"

And so, in couples, we walked the east wall from castle to bastion and back again. Below, the glacis sloped to the open space behind a street of low houses; at her shoulder was the parapeted shelter-wall, and beyond it the gray-green plain spreading to the woods, with smoke from the sheiling fires blowing across it.

"And now, David Gordon," she said, "you will tell me everything about Dungiven and my darling Amy, wife of your cousin."

"She is very happy."

"And her husband at war?"

"Then she may be sad too."

"Tell me about her. How does she carry herself?"

"She is very kind and very wise."

"Go on, please! What is she doing in that place of men?"

"She is creating her own domain—building a sunken garden, with a fish pond, and a lily pond, and a walk of the box-tree."

"Oh! but I would love to see her!" She let go my arm and clapped her hands, happiness in her voice.

"Yet I think that you will never visit that garden in bloom," said I.

"Why do you think that?" she cried quickly, a little startle in her eyes.

"You will be very far away."

She threw up her head and looked at me. "That is a poor reason—that is a poor reason." There was pain in her voice, and then she was calm again and spoke even-toned. "If Amy asks me I will come—even if I be far away."

"You will be welcome," said I.

"And, I wonder, who will welcome me?" And then she was silent, which was strange, for never had I known this maid to be lacking in speech. We met Donn and his fair-haired Duvesa once, twice, before another word passed between us, and then she changed the subject. "How is my old priest?"

"Well. And is not done speaking of your splendid goodness."

"Goodness, no! Happiness, yes! Was I not a queen then?"

"With your wise man—and your fool." Why was I so bitter?

"But we were happy."

"Surely. It were churlish to regret folly."

"Oh!" she cried. "Were you the foolish one?"

"Who else, lady?"

"Why, I was beginning to think that I—but never mind. Since we are at Corrib, let us go on. Ye got home safely?"

"We did."

"And you came back to Saimhor leading a troop of horse?"

"A troop of bonny men."

"And lost them in Sligo tower?"

"Left most of them outside—alive, I hope."

"And twenty of you held the gate-tower against odds?"

"For a little only."

"They speak of a man who sang the sword-song of Black Gillian, and was more terrible than Conal Cearnach of Cuchulain. . . . He wore a bonnet with a blackcock's feather. . . . And he came a prisoner to Athenree. Men say that a man like that man could not be kept behind stone walls unless the walls suited him—for a reason."

This was hitting with bare steel.

"He was but a plain soldier—and foolish," said I.

"Still foolish."

"Still the same folly, my lady.—Here is one, now, that is no fool."

Cosby came striding along and stopped before us, his light, insolent eyes on me.

"Said your thanks?" he inquired shortly.

"They will keep till tomorrow," said I carelessly.

"Eithne!" he cried, "if this prisoner is importunate, a word to me or Sir Francis—"

She laughed merrily.

"David Gordon," she said, "was most entertaining, and I look forward to tomorrow." She looked at me with smiling

eyes. "I shall not be lonely any more—but I was."

"At your service, lady." I lifted bonnet and marched by Cosby, my shoulder stiffened in case he barred the way. But he forbore that push.

DONN MAGUIRE overtook me at the square, and thrust his arm within mine. "You will listen to a few words from me, shut-mouth," he said.

"These four weeks—"

"You never told me you knew Eithne ni Flaherty."

"Nothing to tell."

"No? Tell me, now. For a fortnight you saw her every day?"

"Ten days only."

"But you two became great friends?"

"Well?"

"And it might be a little more?"

"You forget long Cosby."

"I do not. Duvesa MacTheobald—"

"Let us speak of that one."

"I like her," said Donn simply.

"A small saying for you."

"Just that. But wait you! Duvesa thinks—she more than thinks—that this affair with Cosby is of the mother's planning, and that if you—"

"A kind clan of busybodies ye all are," I stopped him sourly.

"Mother o' God!" he cried. "Would I not give my right hand to help?"

"We are prisoners here, and can do nothing."

"Something must be done. Take you to the dungeon, and O'Dwyer and I will get you out of it in spite of hell. Remember—"

But I was set in a hard mood, and stopped him. "When O'Donnell gets south of Cong you or I will take to that dungeon. Let the rest be."

Whereon Donn cursed me fluently.

CHAPTER XXII

EAGLE OF THE NORTH

I WILL not chronicle closely the smooth running course of the next eight or ten days. They were uneventful days in Athenree, but from outside, it away up north, news of stirring happenings came thick and fast.

For O'Donnell donned his eagle wings, swooped down on Clifford's northern line, and smashed it utterly. Sligo fell, and the O'Connor Roe was sore punished for his English leanings; Ballymote was abandoned; Boyle surrendered; Tulsk was burned to the ground; and the clans rolled south, gathering strength as they came.

The MacFirbis, the O'Dowds, the MacWilliams, the O'Haras, the MacDonaghs, the O'Kellys, the MacDermott, the O'Costello threw off the loyalist yoke and flocked to the northern standard. Nothing could withstand that advance, and any day now Cong and Taum might be occupied.

Donn and I waited the word, and no word came. Suddenly all news of the advance ceased. It was as if the clans sank into the ground. They might have swerved east to Athlone or west to Galway, or, for all we knew, marched back with their immense booty to the Saimhor.

Athenree was full as a hive with the loyalist refugees pouring in to the safety of its walls.

Clanricard and Dunkellin in our rear were marshaling their unwilling clans; Clifford at Athlone wrote urgently to Ormonde for reënforcements; Bingham of Galway hurried London-wards on like business; and Vaughan, bent on holding Athenree, strengthened his north wall with half a score of culverin, filled his granaries, and salted down his beeves.

Notwithstanding the many a lesson, the English forgot that the Eagle of the North seldom came the expected road. They were but circling themselves for another onfall.

Donn and I now held ourselves aloof from the garrison and the loyalist lordlings. We looked on these latter as traitors to the blood that ran in them, and that view of ours they sensed and were bitter about.

We owed it to Vaughan to take no part in bickerings, and if we sought the crowded company in the Castle there is no doubt that the hot-headed Maguire would have blade out of scabbard before a day.

But though we no longer visited the castle of an evening, there was one thing we never failed to do. Each early forenoon we sought the east wall between castle and bastion, and there walked an hour with Eithne and her friend. That hour's walk was the accepted routine, accepted by the two ladies, and by Vaughan, and strangely enough by Dame Bevinda, and not disturbed by Cosby, whom now I saw only at a distance.

These were wholly pleasant walks for Donn, but for me there was a sullen pain at heart to mar the pleasantness. For my lady was very kind and very sweet—and very happy.

And I could not quite forgive her the happiness. She was once more the light-hearted, kindly maid who carried the sunlight all about her and was dowered with the unteachable art of winning hearts. And she talked as only she could talk, and got me to talk too, recalling the days we had spent together by Corrib; and discussing her friend Amy, wife of Donal, and the ploys we would have when she came visiting the garden in bloom; and wondering about the conduct of the war, and whether Donal Ballagh would not surely be with Hugh Roe and come down and rescue us; and what we would do when we were so rescued. To that last point she came often and often, and I could not tell her, whereon she twitted me, and made queer subtle small suggestions, the drift of which I did not see.

Oh! we talked of many things, and ever since then, whenever I recall those days, I am angry with myself that I was not all happy.

And always she came back wistfully to the great loneliness that was in her kingdom of Echo Glen when we were gone from it, and how great Maam and wide Corrib were lonesome under the sun.

With Dame Bevinda I became strangely friendly, and I often sat with her in the upper hall and talked of many things —but not again of her daughter. For some reason I could not fathom, she showed a liking for my company and my dour, short answers, and I liked her straightforwardness and her steadfast purpose.

ALL SAINTS' was due to fall on a Saturday. Came Monday of that week and a great hunt. Under Dame Bevinda's and Cosby's arranging everything seemed to be in good train for the wedding, and already the great hall and the upper hall were being decked for the feast.

"The pick of the beeves we have surely," said Ned Billing to Vaughan, "and a rough diet for a wedding."

"What would you have, old gourmand?"

"It is not too early for a barren hind in the south woods."

"With O'Donnell gone to earth there is no reason against your trying. Make it a hunt, and for my soul's sake, get some of these lordlings and their ladies out of town for a day."

And so the great hunt. Full three score rode out of Athenree that Monday morning and streamed south towards the beech woods, and amongst them were close on a dozen ladies, including Eithne O'Flaherty and Duvesa Mac-Theobald. Billing persuaded Donn and me to be of the company, and while Donn hung back amongst the damsels I, mounted on a big black horse of Vaughan's, rode close behind the Italian hounds with Ned and the huntsmen.

"A brave day for sight and scent," commented Billings, "but yon flare of red in the east looks like wind later in the day." He turned in his creaking saddle and surveyed the straggling, careless crowd, from which came laughter of maid and gallant. "Body of me!" he grumbled, after the fashion of the skillful veteran. "Look at them! Think of that noisy pack tracking a wary hind in her own coverts. Like enough, the shy beauties are this minute belly to earth for the Clare border. Lucky we'll be if we get enough venison for Saturday—and I pray old Beelzebub that it choke Cosby."

Much to his own chagrin his forebodings came to be true. The hunters were unruly, pressing amongst the dogs at scent or trying a gallop on their own down the blades, and the hunted were few and shy. Once we lost sight and scent in thick covert, and once a fine fat fallow-doe broke safe away before the

hounds could be laid on. By noon we had not a single head to our credit. Till then the company had not strayed far apart, and a single dining-wind on the horn brought them all together in an open glade near a brook.

"See them come to heel, now!" cried Billing sourly. "God be with the days when dinner depended on good hunting! A juicy collop, new-killed, is worth the whole fee-and-fife of these dainty viands, that it takes one-two pack ponies to carry."

Yet he spoke with his mouth full and busy, and kept a round-bellied quartern of muscadine hid within the bend of knee. "Davy, lad," he whispered, "when this gorging is done you and I will whistle off Satan and Urith Ban to a covert or two I ken."

After a look where Eithne sat at the other side of a hamper from Cosby I assented.

BILLING and I had little difficulty in slipping away after eating. A word to the huntsmen, and we were soon agallop down a narrow wood-alley, the two famous hounds at heel. At the end of a quarter-mile this alley swung to the right, and, as I took the turn, I glanced behind.

For a moment I thought I saw the flutter of a riding-kirtle round the bole of a beech, but my next stride took me out of view.

" 'Ware followers!" I cried to Billings, just ahead.

"Let us be churlish, then." And he pressed on.

We did not slacken rein for a mile or more, and now we had the woods to ourselves. We cast two blank coverts, and then rode south a couple of long miles to where the land trended gently upwards. Here spruce and pine grew amongst the beeches, the ground had in places a carpet of fine needles, and the coverts were fewer between the long aisles of the trees. And here luck came suddenly.

A deer broke from a clump of stunted hazel, and the great hounds at once sighted it, and, baying gloriously, laid on full pelt.

"A barren hind, by Christopher!" shouted the delighted Ned. "Well coated and strong in the haunch. This will test us."

The hunt led us first south and then a little east through open woods, and all the time the hind was in full view. I was never much enamored of a blind following of trail hounds, but here was a pleasant excitement in a plain running down of our quarry. Good it was to gallop loose-reined and feel below one the spring of a horse knowing the game; good to feel the whistle of the wind and hear the unchecked thud of hooves; good to see the hounds at full stretch and cheer them on as they bayed; and, at the end, greatly exciting to judge from the white tail of the quarry the slow drawing in to the first bay.

That hind did not give us a span in the first mile, and when at last we began to wear her down we were well within Dunkellin woods. At long last, after it might be a full hour, Satan, leading white Urith by some lengths, brought the quarry to bay at the foot of a short steep brae. With rearing and trampling forelegs she held the hounds off until we raced near, and then she broke away, the hounds on her haunches. Twice more she was brought to bay before the hounds could hold her by a fallen tree near a wood pool.

Billing, riding some stones lighter, got there first and did not wait for me. Not deigning to set foot against an untined quarry, he charged close in, and, as the hind reared at him, brought her down with a neat back-handed slash of hanger below the ears. "That is how to do it, my bully," he cried, throwing leg over saddle-bow and kicking off the dogs.

I reined in my blown horse and looked down at the fallen hind.

"That will not choke Cosby," I said.

We gutted the hind, and slung her over Billing's crupper. And then we looked about us for our bearings.

"By thunder!" he cried, "that was a hunt—and all to ourselves. A cold supper for us this night! This is somewhere in the direction of Clanish Pool, and there is Fonagh Ard lifting over in the east. Up there lies Athenree, north and a little west. Let us be on our way. There is a blowy evening in front of us."

We mounted, reined round to the north, and set out at a steady half-walk, half-amble, and now quiet dogs at our heels.

That ride sticks in my memory. Before we were half-roads the still day died in an evening of rising gale. Ragged clouds blew across a dun sky, and the great woods began to sigh in the kiss of the wind. Sun there was none, but a weird luminous half-light that came low down amongst the trees, and made the columned trunks stretch out into strange and solemn distances. Ever and again a scurry of fallen leaves rustled about the horses' hooves and whispered away amongst the trees; and above that scurrying whisper was the booming note of the wind, with now and again the cold cry of a whirlwind tossing up the dead leaves in a swaying spiral dance.

"A night I would not care to spend in here," said Billing. "This wind will keep rising—or I a poor judge—and there will be ruin in the woods before morning. Let us put a span to our going."

Twilight was deepening when, breaking between thin coverts, we came out on a wide open, bare of all but a ragged grass. On the far side was the black wall of spruce woods. I knew my whereabouts for the first time.

"Esker Parc this," I said.

"And there be some of the hunt," cried Billing, pointing, "and dismounted."

Near the middle of the open I saw a small party. "Ladies amongst them," I decided, my heart warning me.

They were Eithne, Duvesa MacTheobald, and Doncadh Donn Maguire.

Eithne had lost her hunting-cap, her riding-kirtle was briar-torn, and there were clay stains on her right arm and shoulder. But she took her mishap gallantly, and the wind blowing across the level tossed her black curls bravely.

Maid Duvesa was in a tearful mood of thankfulness. "It was all your fault, Eithne," she insisted. "You would hold that some of the hunt had ridden this way."

"And here they are, ninny," Eithne gave back.

I caught Donn's eye, and he winked at me. "Gave us the slip, too," he said, "and had sport of their own."

EITHNE NI FLAHERTY

"And such a chase," gloated Billing. "An hour—an hour and a half—and four bays."

I brushed dried clay off Eithne's shoulders. "A fall? You are not hurt?"

"No. My horse tripped in a coney burrow. I fear its shoulder is out."

"You were in such a hurry," said Duvesa.

Billing led the hurt pony a few limping paces, and felt its shoulder with knowing fingers. "Ay! A bad wrench. It will not see Athenree to-night with any weight on it. Better strip it and let it make its own way."

"But Eithne?" cried her friend.

"A fine black horse of Vaughan's to carry double," Billing called carelessly, his hands at the girths.

I stripped the English saddle off my charger and put the lady's one in its place. Meantime Ned tied my saddle behind the dead hind.

"Now, Lady Eithne," I said.

"But you?"

"I will show you. Come!"

Without further demur she placed foot in the hand-stirrup I made for her and

was in the saddle like a bird. She grasped the reins, and settled her kirtle, and looked down at me.

"And now?" she wondered.

The horse stood all sixteen hands, and I did a feat I had learned as a boy. I balanced on one leg, hopped on the other, and vaulted astride behind the saddle. Used all my life to riding stirrupless, for me the broad roach of horse was a good enough seat. I whipped my cloak round me. "Home!" said I.

"By the hounds of Finn!" swore Donn.

BEHOLD us, then, riding home to Athenree; Billing, who best knew the road, ahead, Duvesa and her swain close behind, and Eithne and I in the rear—and losing ground. There was no reason why we should lose ground, but Eithne did not press the horse beyond a walk, and I urged nothing. She sat aside on the saddle, and now and then smiled at me sweetly—very gently—across her shoulder.

"If we go too fast," she said, "you will surely fall off."

"I will," I agreed.

I sat, legs awag, leaning well back, and there was still enough light to see the pink shell of her ear and a dark curl playing against the rose of her cheek.

Presently she spoke. "My hands are cold," she said. Yet she wore gauntlets.

"They might be," said I. "Give me the reins."

I straightened up and took them from her in my left hand. My arm lay along her waist, and the steady swing of the horse swayed her gently against it and brought her shoulders touching my breast.

She was silent for awhile now. "The wind is growing," she said at last; and then in a whisper, "it is a cold wind too."

"It will be colder," said I, and she glanced at me quickly and away.

Presently she spoke again.

"I am cold," she whispered, and gave a small shiver.

"And the remedy here," said I, who had the thought of it already in my mind.

The Irish war-cloak is full length and it is as wide as it is long. I unloosened it at my neck, and was about to swing it off my shoulders, when she stopped me. "No; my share only. You were long about it."

So I drew half the cloak round her. "Hold it there," said I.

And we rode on. It was dark now, and we could not see those ahead, but I gave the horse reins and he held his pace smoothly. The keening wind cried all about us; the black copses shut us in; the dead leaves whirled by, pattering and sighing. We were alone in the dark of the world.

After a while the cloak edges slipped from her grasp and blew free. "Butter fingers!" I cried, and resettled it round her.

"My fingers are numb," she said. "You hold it."

"I will do that."

And so both my arms were round her, and she could do no other than lean against me. It was a fine, keen, cruel situation. A middling good man on the back of a big, black war-horse, the pick of all maids on the saddle before him, and the wide dark world in his front. It was bitter and it was sweet. I held her in my arms, and that was honey sweet; but she was wedding another, and that was gall bitter.

And so we rode, the horse swinging smoothly and the wind mocking me. A maid in my arms and—have I never said it before?—and I loving her. She leaned frankly against me now, and frankly I held her, and in spite of any will of mine my right arm was close about her. Her dear dark head was under my chin and her curls sometimes whipped my lips. Every stride of the horse swayed us gently, and her heart beat and beat against my left arm below her breast.

The wind lulled a little and a cold rain came driving down on us. I resettled the great folds of the cloak and pulled the hood over her head, shutting out the night for her. I heard her voice saying the words of an old song: "I am blind in your arms."

In time, I do not know how long, for I did nothing to shorten the ride, we won clear of the woods, and over there across the bare windswept level were the lit

window-slits of the Castle of Athenree.

The maid under the hood did not see them. She turned face up and I saw the dark pools of her eyes.

"You are very strong and very gentle," she whispered.

"I am very strong indeed," I agreed, "but I have no name for gentleness."

"You have a terrible name in war, Blackcock's Feather; but no one, no one at all but Eithne ni Flaherty knows how gentle you are."

My heart turned over. Athenree was very near.

"If you lose your way?" she half-suggested.

"Then we will ride north all night."

"And that would be splendid too. When would we reach Dungiven?"

"Alas! my queen, at the other side of the new moon. Here is the gate of Athenree."

She sat up, and I drew the cloak off her.

"O Mother Mary!" she whispered, in some strange chiding regret that was almost anguish. "O Mother Mary! why did you not answer my prayer?"

There was nothing I could say. The drawbridge was down and torches blazed in the arch. There was her mother, there was Cosby, there was Vaughan—waiting, perhaps wondering. We clanked over the drawbridge and under the echoing hollow of the arch, and, though the torches blazed bright, I looked at no one. I swung off the horse and I reached my hands up to my lady. She slipped into them and was on the ground, her eyes on mine and a glow in them. I took her hand then, and, bowing deeply over it, kissed the fingers that tightened for a moment. And then I straightened up and, taking no notice of any one, walked firmly out into the dark of the street.

DONN overtook me on the way, but, contrary to his habit, not a word came from him. He slapped his riding switch against his leather buskin and strode stubbornly a pace ahead of me. Even when we got within our room, where Cathal waited, he remained silent, and would keep stamping up and down the floor, his head up near the ceiling. Cathal regarded this new Donn Maguire with wonder.

As he paced Donn cast furious side glances at me, but I refused to meet his eye. Though I well knew the only thing there was for me to do, I found it hard to broach the subject, and waited for Donn to make an opening. Presently our landlady came in with our supper of cold pasty and light ale, and I turned to the table as an excuse, but appetite was very far away from me.

"Supper, Donn?"

"To the pit of hell with you and your supper!" he roared at that. And for all of five minutes he used every oath he could remember in Gaelic and English, and they were many. Cathal stared from one to the other of us, dismay in his face that we two should have come to this pass.

At last Donn quieted down and, with sudden resolution, came to the other side of the table and leaned across to me. "What are you going to do, full-mouth?"

There was nothing in my mouth but a slow tongue.

My silence set him off again. "Oh, Great Michael's sword!—Look at him, O'Dwyer, and All Saints on top of us! I will be spitted by the devil's prong before a maid like that one is wasted on a Sassenach shield-striker.—What are you going to do? I asked you!"

I looked him in the eye then. "What are you going to do yourself? Your right is equal to mine."

"Ah! were you thinking of me?" he said softly. And then fiercely, "It would be finer of you to think of the woe that will come to an Irish maiden. Well?"

"By Heaven! Maguire, you are right," I cried. "Tomorrow my sword goes back to Vaughan."

"And by the mother that reared me!" swore Donn, "if we fail to get you out of your stone coffin in four days I will break word myself and snatch Eithne ni Flaherty to a safe place." He straightened up and ran his fingers through his yellow mane. "By Angus of the Birds!" he said cheerfully, "I got that done easier than I expected. Fine man, reach me that pasty and I will be trying your share and mine."

CHAPTER XXIII

END OF PAROLE

DONN MAGUIRE had me up with the sun next morning, and, after a hurried breakfast, helped me on with mail shirt and swordsash. Cathal O'Dwyer came down from his attic to see us go, and smiled gravely out of his wasted face.

"We will meet again, brother," I promised, my arm on him.

"If God is kind, friend of my heart," he murmured quietly.

And we did meet once again.

In the great hall of the castle the halberdmen were already at morning duty, and at the head of it, near a new wood fire, Sir Francis Vaughan sat with a thigh over a corner of the table and waited for his morning drink. As we strode up to him he looked at me and my war-dress curiously. "Will ye try a bowl of hotch-potch with me?" he invited pleasantly.

I slipped off shoulder-sash and laid the great scabbarded sword beside him on the table. He quietly placed his hand on it. "Has it come, then?" he said gravely. "You withdraw your word?"

"I do, Sir Francis."

"If you must, you must." He turned to Donn, his eyes narrowing contemplatively. "And you, Maguire?"

"One fool at a time is enough," said Donn cheerfully.

Vaughan smiled cynically. "Hold it not in your mind that I am that fool."

"The sorry day for me," said Donn.

For a space Vaughan looked musingly on the floor, his hand on my sword and a toe-point tapping quietly on the flags. At the end he drew a long breath.

"Let it be," he said. "We cannot suffer you to escape—and I will not." He called down the hall to his sergeant and gave him his orders. One man was sent for the warden, two others set to guard me, the others to guard the door. He was taking no risks.

And then Donn spoke up in a careless tone: "I think I will see the lad into his cage—if you do not mind, my Governor?"

"Not in the least, Maguire," said Vaughan ironically; "but set you one foot inside the outer dungeon door and within it you will stay. Please yourself."

"I will do that," cried Donn, "and it will be to take myself off, lest worse befall me." He came and clasped my hand, and his bold eye flashed into mine. "Good luck with you, a Gordon—and life to Erin O." And with a brisk salute he swung on his heel and marched high and proud out into the day.

The warden, an old key-weighted man, came and led us down the hall and through the arch into the main-guard at the other side. At the far end of this he unlocked a heavy door and led down a steep flight of stone steps to a gray-lighted cold-smelling passage, running right and left. I had been here before. But the door the warden now unlocked was not the door of the dungeon we had seen that time, but one at the opposite end of the passage. My friend, the enemy, was taking every care to hold me.

My guards stepped back to let me through, and Vaughan followed me in. He pulled the door to behind him, and we were alone in a low wide cell with a damp stone floor, a groined stone roof, and walls sweating cold from every stone; it was dim-lit by a horizontal slit in the far wall; there was a three-legged stool overturned on the floor, a wooden stretcher on squat trestles against the wall, and nothing more—except a black rat, that scurried as we entered.

"It is the best I can offer," said Vaughan. "I am sorry it is not better."

"Wide enough and high enough—and strong enough. What more?"

"I am indeed grieved—my friend—grieved to be compelled to this. I would give a hand—"

"There is mine for you," I stopped him. "You are a true man."

We grasped hands firmly, and without another word he turned and left me.

The door shut, and the lock grated, bolts shot home, and at last I was a prisoner within four walls.

I SAT on the three-legged stool and looked around me, but I had already seen all there was to see. So I put elbows on knees, head between hands, and, hunched

up on that low seat, gazed down on the stone flags for a long time. I contemplated the slowing down of life, the terrible immobility that a man must breed within himself to go on existing in a dungeon, concentrating all his mind down to a single point, subduing his thoughts to one level above nothingness, becoming so little the medium of sensation, drawing so little out of his store, that, like the tortoise, he lives to an extremity of years.

Would I, too, learn that woeful art of doling out the thin stuff of life? Time enough might be mine to acquire it. Four days! and Vaughan watchful. Four weeks—four months—four . . . God Almighty! no!

I started to my feet—the three-legged stool fell over—and began a-pacing of my domain: six paces from door to window-slit and five across. Standing on tiptoe, I could touch the point of the groined roof; the door was steel-clamped black oak; the window-slit was chin-high, and barely a span wide, and the mortar binding that cut stones that framed it was iron-hard. By looking at a certain angle a could see a narrow band of sky above the tip of the fosse, but, that day, the sky was grayly drear, and, though I watched a long time, there was never a rift of blue or gleam of sun to reward me.

That day was Tuesday. It passed slowly, but not yet draggingly, for there was much to think about and one or two things to avoid dwelling on. Food in plenty was brought me from Vaughan's own table, as well as a couple of skins for night covering. Two tall halberdiers of the guard were my warders. One stood fully armed at the door while the other attended to my wants, and they made no attempt to open discourse with me. I was adjudged a man of desperate daring, for no good reason, and the rumor of my name and deeds had grown foolishly monstrous.

Slowly the light drained out of my cell, and I followed it to the window-slit and watched the sad darkening of the sky. When I turned away at last I looked into a black darkness that, yet, seemed to flow in waves, and the rats were getting bold. With an effort I refrained from stamping foot and hissing them still, for I knew that I must grow accustomed to the pattering sound of these light feet.

For a time I sat on the edge of the trestle-bed, hoping that some one would visit me. But no one came. There was only the dark, and the feet of the rats, and the sough of a rising wind down the gut of the fosse.

So I pulled off my steel over-shirt and lay down under the skins, hoping that sleep would come. But sleep, that fickle one, stood off from me, and thoughts that had been at bay all day broke in and would not be denied. What I feared to contemplate was the failure of rescue, the failure of O'Donnell, the long winter in this house of stone, and the gradual sinking into that lethargy that alone makes slow confinement bearable. And these I contemplated now.

Patience, David Gordon! Be not a child fearing the dark and the cold and the rats. Give your friends—your splendid and leal friends—a chance to show their worth. In these you have been lucky—luckier than in your love. No! You have loved a quick gentleness, a wayward sweetness, a frank nobility. Enough for any man. And though you lose them they shall remain with you always.

But, indeed, they are not yet lost, desperate though the gamble is, for your friends are busy, and they are bold and eager.

Give them a little time. Nothing can happen this night, nor, it may be, tomorrow night; but on the third night—surely on the third night?—some plan will be desperately evolved and desperately put to the test. For that you must be prepared in thew and brain. Be patient, then, and say your prayers—and sleep will come.

And in time sleep came.

I DID not sleep long—an hour—it could not be two hours. It was the slow grate of the lock that waked me. I lifted to an elbow and looked at the door, and there was a faint gleam of light through the keyhole. A pause then, and the bolts were slowly levered back and the hinges

squeaked shrilly. I saw a lanthorn in the opening and the big hulk of a man above it. That bulk slipped through and the door shut behind it.

"Who is it?" I had one knee drawn up and my weight balanced.

He fumbled at the lanthorn door and the light diffused itself through the cell. The man was Tom Pybus. I sank back on my elbow.

"From the governor?"

He hesitated, and then, "No, master—my own business and yours."

I again stiffened elbow. Here was an East Saxon, man of a tribe I did not ken. What things might touch him deeply was a mystery to the Gael in me. To outward seeming he was quiet and stolid, stupid rather than placid; but it could be that fires of resentment burned deep down in him. Three times in the past I might have killed him, yet did not; but his life had been spared with something of a contempt that must rankle bitterly —and rankling bitterly . . . ? In the hooded light I could not read his face, but in his hand he carried what looked like a sword. I was watchful. This fellow in handgrips would be strong as a bull.

"Sit," I invited. "The stool is there."

"No, master. There is hurry." But, hurry or none, he was slow to begin, and I could not help him. "Master," he said at last, "you have a great name as a swordsman."

"The name only."

"More. I saw you fight in Sligo gate, and you killed men like flies. But look! Three times you had me and let me go. Why?"

He asked me the question simply, and frankly I had to answer. "You were too easy to kill. Do you resent it?"

"How? You were in danger and took time to be merciful. That is what I remember, master—my life three times."

Here was a surprising Tom Pybus. Suddenly he sat down on the stool, shuffled his feet, and made a great effort to be articulate to himself and to me. "I am only a common soldier, but I am not blind to—to the things that be going on. Master, this be no affair of war or sogering, and fair play is what I like—and you cannot have that behind a locked door. Master, whether I be doing right or wrong, I am doing what I must. I bring back your sword. Here!" And there was the hilt thrust into my hand and my fingers acurl round the familiar grip. "You will know what to do with it," he said meaningly.

Without another word he grasped his lanthorn and made for the door. I heard it close softly behind him, and waited, ears on the stretch. Silence only. There was no sound of lock or bolt.

I lay there for a time, remaking my notions of this plain soldier, who grasped fair play as he saw it and was not troubled by any other loyalties. He had given me my sword, left me with an open door, and put the rest of the problem into my own keeping. "Do what you like now," he might have said, "and if it is not adequate your name belies you." Here was fair play and a challenge at the same time. It behooved me to stir myself and take all the risks that lay within the walls of Athenree.

I did not don my mail shirt, since the weight of it might slow me, but slipped sash over shoulder, folded cloak over arm, drew my sword, and moved in the dark towards the door. I groped and found it, and it yielded to my touch with a long protesting squeak. I looked into the blackness of the passage and listened. Not a sound but my own blood in my ears. Even the rats were quiet.

On tip-toe I moved across the passage till I touched the other wall, and then, right arm advanced, went forward step by step till my shoulder, that had been touching the dark stones, slipped into vacancy. Here was the well of the stairs, and again I paused, looking up into the darkness. The stairhead door into the main-guard was evidently shut. I felt with a foot for the bottom tread of the stairs, found it, and my back to the side wall, sidled upwards. One—two —six—ten stone steps and my outstretched sword-point touched the wood of the door above me. Slight though that touch was, it set the door moving noiselessly, and before I might crouch I was looking up the long length of the guard-room. I drew in a long breath and sank down until my eyes were just above the level of the threshold.

"Blackcock's feather!" he stammered.

THERE was little to see, and everything there was to see, at the same time. Just the dim-lit length of the great room, and a group of soldiers round a rough table by the fireside at the far end; and all but one of the group were bent over the board engaged in throwing dice with the death-and-life interest of the gambler. The man standing upright was Tom Pybus, his broad back to me and his hands clasped easily behind him.

Directly above the table was a rush-wick lamp hung at the end of a chain, and this with the red glow of the peats was the only light in the room. Where I crouched was but the faintest glimmer.

The wavering smoke-tipped light gleamed on the angles of hard and eager faces, shadows sprawled and leaped as men bent forward to count the throws, and the outlines of legs were picked out to the last curve against the glow of the fire on the hearth.

I had to get out of that room. There were two doors to choose between. One was the door into the bailey, full in the light of the hanging cruisie, and I knew that a sentinel walked the stone platform outside it. The other was directly behind the dicers, but, instead of wooden door, it was hung with a heavy curtain. Within that curtain, I knew, was a twist of stair leading up to the armory and to the portcullis pent beyond, and, from the portcullis pent, a short flight of steps led down to the upper hall, which, as has been said, gave on the east wall by a side door. There was my road.

I followed that road in my mind's eye and, as I did so, big Tom Pybus moved a pace to the right so that his broad back was between the dicers and the curtain. Here was the plain hint. I looked across the floor. It was clear of impediment or scatter of rushes. Would I crawl on my knees or slink along by the wall? I did neither. I walked slowly and on tip-toe, holding my breath, and ready at a lift of head to bound into action and drive a way through. And as I walked I heard the dicers talk and growl and laugh. They were baiting one man out of luck, and he was not hiding his chagrin.

"Hell's bowels!" he swore. "Double-dice again."

"The luck you deserve, yellow-belly."

"Say that again, pig-mouth!"

"No. You might be wiser to take his supper to Blackcock's Feather—six shillings wiser."

"Not a slit windpipe wiser, my fine—"

I moved the curtain softly aside from the jamb and slipped through, and as the curtain settled behind me a bench fell over with a startling clang. I had been seen! Now for action.

I clambered up the wind of the stairs, no longer moving quietly, bruised a shoulder against the pillar of the spiral, and bundled through another curtain at the stair-head—straight into the arms of a soldier who carried a tallow dip alight above his head. I had forgotten the night-guard on the portcullis.

The curtain had bellied into his face and he had not yet had time to recog-

nize me, but if his eyes were slow his tongue was not. "Hog! What joke is this?"

My sword must have missed him only by a touch. The hilt was against his ribs. My left arm was folded in my cloak, but my hand was free, and, as he grappled me, I drove clenched fist fiercely below his breast-bone. The grunt he gave was the last gasp of his driven wind, the lighted dip fell behind him, and he sank down between my knees and rolled over. I strode over him—and paused.

No steps came clambering on the turret stairs; from there came only the distant sound of voices and laughter. Then I understood. The unlucky gambler, tired of ill-luck and baiting, had only started up from the table—and started me hurrying. A lucky chance. Otherwise I must have met this fellow, now kicking on the flags, on mid-stairs and at a grave disadvantage.

Strangely enough, the light had not been put out by its fall. It shivered, a faint glow, in some current of air across the flags, and I picked it up hastily, cupping it in my hand against the draught. The man on the floor was now on his back, and I peered into his face. It was horribly atwist and his eyes were white balls. When his wind came back to him I must be well out of his reach.

Facing me, in the steel-cumbered wall of the armory, was the door to the portcullis pent. I strode to it and up four short steps into a long and narrow chamber. The heavy top-bar of the grid ran along the floor, the windlass was at my hand, chains ran up into the darkness, and a cold air came up from below, and had a smell of the outside. At the other end of the chamber was mate of the door I stood within, and I made my way along the portcullis bar, drew the bolt, and looked down a straight flight of stone steps to a heavy black curtain.

I crushed out the taper under heel, and darkness closed in on me, but at the foot of the steps there was a chink of light at the side of the curtain. I felt my way down, widened the chink carefully with one finger, peeped through—and straightway forgot the danger behind me.

THERE was the upper hall. The wall lights were not burning, but a branch of three waxen candles was alight on a small table near the fireplace. The arras was decked with laurel and holly, and the polished leaves glistened in the candle gleam. A room decked for the wedding-feast! And yonder the bride. Eithne O'Flaherty sat at the table-end.

She sat as still as a carved figure, an elbow on the board and her chin in her cupped hand, and her lovely dark eyes stared unblinkingly before her. Her dark curl lay on her white brow, and there was ebb of color from satin cheek. But in that pallor was not the coldness of marble, but some tender waxen transparency showing the magic of flesh and spirit. Here was no impish, merry lass, but a woman grown, contemplating something in her mind that made her eyes somber.

She was not alone. Dame Bevinda, her mother, sat near her at the table-head, a tambour-frame before her on the board below the light, and she was engaged in making careful stitches on some white circle of embroidery. So she had some of the arts of woman as well as of captain. Every now and then she glanced aside at her daughter, but her daughter never looked at her. Both were silent.

I could not stand watching there forever. The man in the armory, recovering wind, would be urgent to discover the hog that rid him of it; the alarm might be expected any moment now. My only road led through this upper hall and through the bolted door behind the ladies' backs. Take it while there is time, David Gordon, and risk the Dame's alarm. So I drew in a deep breath, drew the curtain aside, and stepped softly within.

I was halfway down and within the circle of light when Eithne saw me. She did not start, but her eyes widened and narrowed and again widened, and she rose from her chair, as if lifted by a force outside herself. "David!" she whispered, and her lips remained apart.

Dame Bevinda hid her surprise. She did not even rise from her low chair, but leaned her hands on her tambour frame

and waited until I halted before them.

"And why the long blade, Master David?" she inquired calmly.

I glanced down at my naked sword, and for the first time it looked a silly long weapon. I smiled at it, and sheathed it quickly, and shook cloak loose on my arm.

"That is more seemly, surely. Did you break through your locked door? How many dead men are behind you, Blackcock's Feather?"

"None yet, Dame."

"And now?"

"I will take that door behind you, with your favor."

"And without it?"

"Then I must take it without, Dame."

She laughed, not unkindly. "You know," she said, "I will be sorry to see the last of you."

"Your sorrow may be long in coming, Dame," I gave her back.

Eithne had been watching me with all her eyes, and now she did a thing that surprised me. She jerked back her chair and ran light-footed up the long room to the head of the stairs leading down to the main hall. She leaned there listening, her dark head turned aside, and the mother and I watched her.

"You grow in daring, Master David," the Dame mused, her eyes not turning to me. "Shall I look for you before Saturday?"

"Or after it, Dame."

"Then you will be late."

"No, by God!" I was driven to say—"as long as a sword can cut a knot."

"A threat?"

"Take it so."

Suddenly Eithne started, looked towards us, hesitated, leaned again to listen, and then came flying to us, an arm extended to me. "Fly, David!" Urgent the whisper. "They come."

And, in turn, her mother surprised me. She started up from the chair. "Silly girl!" she cried. "Could you not think?" She threw a word to me over her shoulder: "Quick!" and, long-striding, went up the hall and stepped within the stair door. We heard her voice: "Your pardon, Sir Francis. I was seeking a flagon of your sweet muscadine."

We did not catch the reply. We did not wait for it. Eithne had my arm and was dragging me towards the side door, too fast for dignity. "Hurry, hurry, David!" Her strong young hands were quicker on the bolt than mine, and the cold air beat in on us through the open door.

I caught her two hands in mine. "I will be back, Queen. Listen, now! Trust Donn Maguire—and his friend named O'Dwyer—to the death."

"I know—I know! Go now."

Sudden and warm she pulled my hands forward and pressed them against her breast. Then she pushed me quickly out in the dark and shut the door softly in my face.

I LEANED against the parapet wall by the side door and gathered wits together. They needed gathering. A moment ago my hands felt my lady's heart beat, and now I was out in the cold and unfriendly night.

Unfriendly? No. A fine night for a venture like mine, dark but not dead black, with faint stars in the rents of a sky ragged before a north wind; a bleak, windy, October night, with, now and then, a cold spit of rain in the wind's mouth. There below me was Athenree, dark and still, before me in the dimness stretched the parapeted head of the east wall, and all I had to do was to bend head below parapet and make for the corner bastion and the north wall.

There at last was the loom of the bastion close ahead, and I paused to peer and listen for the sentinel before venturing round by the glacis platform. The only sound was the sough of the wind in the teeth of the parapet, and I was about to slip round the body of the tower, when a yellow spark of light appeared far down the north wall. The night patrol changing guard. Many a wakeful night I had lain in my quarters and listened to it tramping by every couple of hours, and watched the lanthorn gleam run along the ceiling. I slipped in behind the tower and waited for the sentinel's challenge, but his challenge, when it came, startled me. For it came from less than a score of feet way around the curve of the wall. Very

like, the careless fellow had been sheltering from the wind in the angle of the bastion, and it was my luck—and his too—that the patrol had halted me.

I listened anxiously. If Ned Billing was on his nightly round he might, as was not unusual, circle the tower and seek the castle for a last drink. And I would not care to set Ned's loyalty and his friendship over against each other. But when the patrol halted at the other side of the bastion it was the sergeant's voice that was lifted. After that followed a murmuring and a shuffling, then a brisk order, the quick stamp of trained feet, and the patrol moved away towards the north gate.

No sound once more but the piping of the wind, yet still I waited and listened—and in the end jumped too quickly to an explanation. "The sentinel," I told myself, "is gone up the wall behind the patrol; now for it!" And forthwith I darted round the tower—straight into his arms.

Luck, the trickster, once again!

"Who goes—"

He got no further. My cloak smothered him, and his arquebus dropped between us. I had not time to be gentle and apologetic. He was a thick, short fellow, but already I had his head down in a notch of the parapet, a hand on his throat, my weight on his chest, and a knee across his thighs. A little jerk of pressure to warn him how easily his neck would snap, and he went limp under me. I pulled up his head then and put mouth to his ear. "Silence, or I kill!"

I threw the cloak off his face, and he must have caught my feathered bonnet against the sky. "Blackcock's Feather!" whispered his strangled voice.

I was thinking rapidly and closely. My plan to drop from the wall into my old quarters and have word with Donn and Cathal would be possible only if I killed this man. And, cold-blooded, I could not kill him.

"Attend!" said I in a deep growl, and the slack tremor of him under my hands showed that he would welcome mercy, but did not expect it. "You will march up the wall to the second culverin and there count two hundred—slowly. Come back then, and your arquebus will be here. One small outcry, and I will throw your weapon into the ditch—and you can explain how you lost it before they hang you. Suit yourself. March!"

And he marched. He had not gone fifty paces before I grasped the pointed edge of the parapet, vaulted over, let myself drop to full length, thrust my feet against the stones, and leaped blindly. I struck ground with a jar, and went hands and knees amongst the dying weeds in the bottom of the ditch. There were nettles, too, I knew by the sting. On my feet again, I groped forward to the back of the ditch. It was a slope of stiff clay, and I kicked in a toehold, clambered to the top, and faced round to Athenree.

There it lay, hid in the night, holding my one jewel, fateful place of kings, fatal field of Connacht, blown over by the wind, showing neither tower nor roof, deeming itself safe against surprise. And here was its doom looking in over its toothed, sunken north wall.

THE wind blew steadily out of the north, and I could not go astray by holding in the teeth of it. Before me was the empty spread of pasture-land, and beyond that, beech woods to the marshes of Suck; and beyond Suck I must be before morning.

So, grasping cloak and sword under an arm, I struck the long, sloping, hillman gait, the hunter's lope that eats the miles. The keen wind sharpened me, the thin rain freshened me, the dark was a friend of mine.

But an hour ago had I stared into the weary horror of the dungeon, and only now did I know how abasing to the soul is even the easiest of captivity. Here, now, was freedom and a purpose with it. Sometime tomorrow I might strike the outposts of O'Donnell, gone to earth somewhere south of Cong, and the words I had to say to him would surely bring the eagles of the north swooping on Athenree. And then—and then?

The wall of the woods loomed before me. In there was safety. And then, somehow, of no will of my own, my voice lifted in one cheer for freedom—the long howl of the wolf on the run, that

high, quivering, hair-bristling call of the killing trail. The trees echoed back that howl.

Soon I was forcing through thickets of bramble and hazel that fringed the open beech glades. The branches brushed dankly against my hands up to guard my eyes, briar trailers caught at my knees, grass tussocks were treacherous under my feet, but I pressed steadily forward, and at last won through to the leaf-carpeted open.

And there something caught my feet that was no briar, and I fell full-length on my face. Sudden hands caught my shoulder, a heavy body threw itself across my legs, a bent knee was in my back.

"Gay lad, we will put a stop to your howling!"

CAUGHT! A moment ago free, with knowledge of the splendor of freedom—and now flat as a toad and as helpless.

A toad? No! a fox! A fox lying still, but not cowed. For, surely, if freedom was such a splendid thing it was worth fighting for—and dying for. Now! this minute. If I had any of the fury of the Gael in me—

"Quiet as a rabbit he is," said a deep voice above me, and hands slackened for an instant.

At that I jerked my shoulders free, embraced a hairy limb, and sent a body toppling. The man on my back fell over, and I elbowed him fiercely in the ribs. "Chreesta!" he swore. "Manus, you pig, where are you?" But for the man on my legs I might have torn clear, but before I could kick him off the other two pounced back on me.

Hands clawed, feet twined, blows clouted, and striking, kicking, twisting, I heaved myself up, tangled in my cloak, sword between my legs. Twice I reached my knees, once my feet, and my hand on my hilt, but my attackers were as dourly determined as I was and again swarmed me down. Before I fell that last time I somersaulted a man over my shoulder, fell on him, and held him under me to die.

"Chief," roared a straining voice. "Will I prick him—or Ferdoragh is a dead man? By the throat he has him."

"Hands off knife!" commanded a voice outside the vortex. "Would ye spoil our night? Three of ye to one man! Ye sons of old men! Give me room!"

At his first words I stopped struggling. My fingers loosed from the man's neck, and I allowed myself to be dragged clear of him.

"Grip him, Manus," panted the deep voice, "or he is on us again. The mad wolf! Ferdoragh's windpipe is broken anyway."

"And what were your big paws doing, Tadg?" upbraided the chief's voice. "Put him on his feet, babes, and let me rest hand on him."

One of the men holding me suddenly caught me round the body and swung me upright. "There he is, then, and the devil is in it if he breaks this hold."

But my stark fury was burned out. In the reaction and relief laughter came up in my throat.

"Bloody wars! The tears are at him," said an amazed growl at my shoulder. And at that I broke into a bark of laughter.

A tall figure loomed before me and a firm hand caught my shoulder. "Who laughs at death, fine fellow?" he questioned me sternly.

"Time you asked," I said calmly.

"God!" His face came close. "Who is it?"

"A pleasant welcome, cousin Donal," said I.

"Davy! Is it you, my darling?" His hands fell about my shoulders and ran up to my hair. I could feel the caress in them; I was amongst my own again. "It is yourself," he whispered. "God is good."

Tadg Ironhand loosed his clutch, but, before he did, I felt his great palm press over my heart.

"The hurt of hell to us!" he cursed. "There are a couple pieces out of me, anyway." And then came a note of satisfaction into his voice: "And Ferdoragh is choked dead, glory be to God!"

"He was near that same," said the Ferdoragh from the ground. "Mary! but I saw the gates of hell in front of me."

We all laughed, and the throat-filling tension eased.

Donal Ballagh's arm was round me.

"A miracle under the stars," he said. "Senan will say it was his prayers. He is behind in the woods half a mile."

"But how are ye here?" I began to wonder.

"Looking for you, my light, what else? We knew where you were held. Where is Doncadh Donn?"

"Back there in Athenree—and playing his part. A long story, cousin."

"Let us to where it can be told, then —and the night before us."

And so we went back to Donal's camp amongst the beeches, and waked Father Senan from his nest in the root crotches. And, frankly, he wept over me, and could not speak for a long time.

"If only Amy could know," said Donal with longing, when I had told my tale and heard all the news, "and she getting ready her fine garden."

Donal, the priest, and I were seated against a great trunk, and the priest leaned over and touched me. "Davy," he asked me softly, "will no one be visiting our lady in that fine garden?"

"How do I know? There are stone walls between."

"We came down to look over the same walls," said Donal, "and, maybe, look inside them too."

"With how many men? Remember what fell in Sligo, when I lost my bonny troop."

"Five only—God rest them—and Tadg here with a small limp."

"It was worth it," said Tadg, lying on the ground before us. "I heard the sword-song of Black Gillian sung as it should be sung."

"I have two hundred of our own lads in these woods," said Donal. "Enough?"

"Two hundred! A thousand—"

He caught my arm. "Listen, my heart o' corn! We are the spearhead only. Hugh Roe has three times your thousand strung out and across behind us—all moving softly and all pointing this way—waiting for the home-thrust. Enough?"

I felt an excitement surge in me.

"Donal," I cried, "if O'Donnell is bold as they say, he could storm Athenree this night."

"Bold! Athenree is ours. Hugh Roe is not a mile behind. Let us back and talk to him."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SACK OF ATHENREE

WE had drawn up to the sunken north wall in the dark hour before the dawn, a spear-head of fifty men; and ten times that number lay strung out on the plain before the north gate.

Our forlorn hope of fifty was to make a surprise sally on the wall and on the gate-tower, with the intent of lifting the portcullis and letting the five hundred in and the five hundred, once in, would secure a hold on Athenree that might not be broken before the heavy-armed gallowglasses came up from the camp beyond the marshes. After that nothing could save that stronghold to the English.

Behold me, then, in the dark hour creeping to the brink of the ditch and looking in over the sunken wall. At my shoulder, his hand on my belt, was Donal Ballagh, and stretched out and linked behind us was a chain of fifty men. Each man carried on his shoulders a great bundle of grass and faggots. I had led that burdened chain across the plain from the woods, and it had been a most nerve-tightening task. For I had nothing to guide me but the wind, and one small shift in that would throw me wide of Athenree. Somehow, I felt the hardest of my task over when the gate-tower loomed out of the darkness.

Donal and I crouched on the brink of the ditch and listened. There were no sounds but our breaths, our heart-thuds, and the wind piping as it had always piped, careless of man and his affairs.

"We will be quiet," whispered Donal, "as long as the watch lets us."

I slipped into the ditch, and Donal followed after a word to the man behind. And then we built our bridge of faggots, each man passing his bundle up the line and Tadg Ironhand throwing it down to us.

The sentinel gave no sign while the work proceeded. He gave no sign when

"God! Why did you not let me die!"

at last Donal, Tadg, and I crouched within the parapet close to a mounted culverin.

"They use a shelter-spot in the corner of the bastion down there," I explained.

"Wait ye here," whispered back Tadg. "It would be the fine thing to keep him quiet," and he crept up the wall.

We waited. No sound came out of the dark, but in less than five minutes Tadg himself came crouching.

"He was asleep," Tadg told us. "So I gave him one small blow and tied his belt in his teeth. Let us to it."

Donal and Tadg sat astride, each in a notch of the parapet, and, one by one, the even flow of men was helped over into my hands. Our bridge gradually sank, and the last few men had to be hauled up from their own height below the wall. My part was to array the men in a close line along the shelter wall towards the gate. No word was spoken; the men came silently into my hands; silently I led them into place; and silently patted each man on the shoulder for a comrade. They were my own men, and ready for any game.

The north wall was ours. And Athenree, confident of its strength, was in its last dawn sleep. Not yet was there the clang of steel, the yell of slogan, anything at all to warn it of its doom. The wind only, weary and never weary, cried with a mournful sameness.

Now I was moving forward, drawn sword in my left hand, my right touching, now the parapet, now the chill flank of a culverin. The big mass of the gate-tower loomed above. My hand touched cold stone in front, and then the cut lintel of the guardroom door, and groping softly over wood, found the iron latch-guard.

"Ready!" I whispered, and that small whisper sighed down the line.

The latch clicked, the door swung in, and, quietly as a friendly visitor, I stepped out of the dark into the murky light of the guardroom of the north gate.

I changed hilt to right hand.

THE north gate of Athenree was defended by keep, drawbridge, and portcullis; and portcullis and drawbridge were controlled from the guardroom wherein I now stood.

This was a great chamber covering the whole floor of the keep; east and west were doors giving on the wall head; a row of window-slits looked in on Athenree; and opposite these was the windlass, with chains running through loopholes in the wall. In a far corner was the door of the turret stairs leading up to Ned Billing's quarters.

I strode in at the east door and got the whole scene at a glance: the red smolder of the peats in the big fireplace, the smoky glow of the lanthorns on the wall, the grotesque shadows aleap into the darkness of the arched roof, the guard scattered at ease. The men—twenty or so—were at the hearth end, and many of them asleep or dozing, lying asprawl on the wooden settles, leaning forward on the trestle-tables, lolling in the inglenook, unhelmeted, careless, dreaming no danger. And pouring in on them out of the dark a stream of fierce northern men, a gleam in their eyes and no worse gleam on the wicked blades of the axes.

One moment quietness and then—then we were amongst them. Some one lifted a head and cried shrilly—a bench fell crashing—a clamor lifted and was closed with the bellow of an arquebus—and steel rang on steel. Quick and short that fight! The guard was surprised, and our men were built, body and mind, for hand-to-hand work. The press closed in, clanged, circled, broke asunder, scattered, and there was no more resistance.

Donal and I did not need to strike a single blow. The moment the fight broke Donal and half a dozen picked men flung themselves on the windlasses, and the blows were still sounding when the chains of drawbridge and portcullis began to creak.

For my own part I was busy looking for Ned Billing, and swinging clear of the heart of the fight, made for the turret door. And I had almost reached it when it was jerked open and Ned burst through. He was amazed and barely awake, and his head, without casque, was round and nearly bald; his tunic was unlaced and his broad hairy chest showed through his linen; and he carried his drawn sword in his right hand.

Just as he appeared lean Ferdoragh, handy as a terrier, back-heeled a tall soldier before the turret door, and had sgian drawn back and down for the groin stroke. Billing, with a roar, swung up his blade and slashed furiously downwards at the clansman's head, but I took the blow close to the hilt and jarred the sword out of his hand. Forthwith I strode over Ferdoragh, got my forearm across Ned's throat, and forced him back into the doorway. Ferdoragh was behind me, yelling, "The sgian, hero! Give him the sgian." His short red blade was dancing and darting.

I looked at him over my shoulder.

"Follow me," I shouted.

I made full use of my strength. I caught Billing round the small of the back, and with one furious burst of energy bore him up the stair and into his own sleeping-room. There I thrust him backwards and brought blade to the point. Ferdoragh, bundling in behind me, I collared left-handed.

Ned was still dazed.

"David!" he cried. "What is it?"

"The sack of Athenree," I told him. "You are my prisoner."

He struck his breast with clenched fist. "God! Why did you not let me die?"

"Die?" I bellowed. "Enough will die this day. Gather your wits, man." I glanced down at Ferdoragh, now quiet under my hand.

"Ferdoragh, this man has befriended me greatly," I said quietly.

"And me too, then," cried Ferdoragh, and then grinned happily after the manner of his breed. "And he after trying to knock a hole in the poll of me."

"You will guard him here—with your life."

"With my life, surely," said Ferdoragh soberly.

I turned and leaped for the door.

"Do not be an old fool, Ned!" I threw over my shoulder.

I heard the echoing slogan of the clans in the arch.

HIGH noon in Athenree and the fight in a deadlock.

A long and swaying fight since the dawn, and at high noon that dawn seemed far away. It had been a dawn that came slowly. Slowly the wan day had lifted and broadened, showing pointed gables in one flat perspective with the great keep of the castle towering above, the gray of the stone walls, the black squares of windows, men lurking, soldiers running, smoke curling —and the fight worrying and thudding through it all.

Let it be said here that the English and loyalist Irish met our onslaught with a fierce starkness worthy of all great fights. Hurriedly mustered out of barrack and bothy, they uprose behind walls, leaped down on us from embrasures, leaned to fire from window and roof, manned here and there a hurried barricade, and, in the end, held us in lock before half the town was won.

My part in that fight was that of all the others of my breed; breast to breast, driving inwards shoulder to shoulder, desperately eager and determined unto death to secure a hold on Athenree that could not be shaken till the gallowglasses came. We had won East Lane and the whole length of the north wall, and had come up starkly against an iron resistance along the square at the heart of the town. A score of us had won across a lane making two triangles of Athenree, and were attacking a stone house strongly held. We flanked it down a narrow alley between head-high walls, and Tadg Ironhand, who had fought shoulder to shoulder with me all that morning, gave me a heel-lift to the crown of the wall on the right. As I bent to tug him up the whole world crashed to blackness before my eyes; a clang, a flash, and I fell and fell into utter darkness. It was that sudden bending sideways that had saved my life; for as I bent an arquebus ball grazed above my ear and laid me senseless outside the wall.

CHAPTER XXV

"WHERE IS MY SWORD?"

IT HAD been a sore clout on a hard Scots head, and it was long and long before my senses returned to their citadel. Consciousness came out of the well of blackness, trembled on the edge, dipped back and came again. I looked up, and men who were strange bent over me, and I wondered where and who I was. It was night-time, I knew, for candles burned on the wall where the arras was torn and branches of laurel and holly glistened here and there. It was the branches of evergreen that, queerly enough, brought memory back. This was the upper hall of Athenree Castle, decked for the feast —but why were the green leaves draggled and the arras torn? And a smell of smoke and burning was in my nostrils.

"Eithne!" said I aloud, and my voice was heavy and tired.

"Give him a drink," said a voice I knew, and I looked at the men around me. They were strangers no longer. Father Senan sat on the edge of the stretcher-couch whereon I lay; Donal Ballagh and Tadg bent over his shoulder, and Ned Billing stood at the other side, a flagon cupped in his hand.

"Father!" said I.

"Son!" said the priest, and his hand was cool on mine.

Tadg's bearded face crinkled up as if tears would flow, but, instead, he laughed.

"You could not kill him! Not with a stone head," said Ned Billing.

Donal Ballagh drew his hand downwards from brow to chin, and his face, that had been white and strained, was now smiling.

And then I knew the dull throb of an ache above my right ear and felt the tightness of a bandage across my brow. I brought a hand up to feel, and swore at the twinge.

"Fine!" said Donal with satisfaction. "Good and fine! Now we know that you are back with us."

They gave me the drink that I needed. Tadg wanted to give me ale as the only safe drink to quench a grown man's thirst, but the old friar knew enough of wounds and medicines to insist on cool water.

After that I was able to turn on my side and get an elbow under me, though the room rocked.

"Did any one see my good bonnet?" I asked.

"Here it is," said Donal, "with the devil's horns still on it—and the dint in the steel mesh that saved you."

I looked around the hall. There was no one in it but ourselves. "Athenree—"

"Is ours. It is so! When the gallowglasses came we burned down the wooden doors and in on them."

"Prisoners?"

"A few. Your Sir Francis Vaughan with a broken thigh bone—and this officer you left with Ferdoragh."

I looked at Ned Billing, and reached him my hand. "Donal," said I, "this is Captain Ned Billing and my friend."

"We knew that. We hope he will like a winter at Dungiven!"

I looked up at Donal, but Donal would not look at me. It was Senan that told me, still holding my hand. "The governor sent the women out to safety before the gallowglasses came—to Athlone, we think. She is not in town, David—nor is Donn Maguire, dead or alive."

I lay back on the stretcher. There was no more I wanted to know. My bright bird, so near my hand, had flown away or been caged away, and the winning of Athenree was only an empty boast. I was weak and weary and aching. Life was too low in me to feel the stab. I shut my eyes and was dumb—dumb as a fish and as cold.

IT WAS high day when I waked, and a bar of sunlight lay across the cloak that covered me. The heat and ache were out of my bones, and only a small dull ache in my head—and I was hungry. I turned over and lifted on my elbow.

"Will any one give me my yesterday's breakfast?" I wanted to know sourly. And a fine peal of laughter went up to the arches.

Hugh Roe O'Donnell, our great leader, stood at my side with Donal and the priest. Slim and fine he was, a clean silken tunic on his supple shoulders and his red hair smooth above the clean pallor of his face. And a smile hid the dream-gloom in his gray eyes. "Breakfast it is," he cried, "or I go without."

I felt embarrassed and had no word to say.

"He will take what he gets," said Senan, "and it will be fat enough for him.

The prince put his hand on my shoulder and I felt the warmth of his fingers. "David Gordon," said he, "the North owes you a great victory." I moved my heavy head slowly, and he bent and, looking into my eyes, smiled wistfully. "I know—I know, O friend!" he said slowly. "I cannot help you. What you want you must take with your own hands. My poor lad! But what is O'Donnell's is your always." He touched me softly on the shoulder, turned and walked away slowly, his hands behind him and his head forward—a young but very lonely man. And we all were silent till he passed through the door.

I put a long leg out of the bed. "If you think—"

Donal put me back with one hand. "Here comes your breakfast, red fellow."

Tadg came with a bowl of porridge—gruel it was, and steaming, with a horn spoon in it and a bar lick of honey on it.

"No!" I roared, and looked at Senan. "Is this all I am getting, bald pate?"

"Just that." His eye was obdurate, and I looked at Donal, who kept a serious face.

I took the mazer roughly from Tadg's great hands, looked at it with disgust, and: "Very well so," I growled. "I may as well try it." And they laughed at me.

Donal sat silently at the end of the stretcher and waited till I had finished and then he looked into my eyes, felt my hand, and nodded. "David," said he then, "there is a dying man wants word with you."

"Not Donn—"

"No—no! Donn is whipped off to Athlone, I doubt. A man in your lodging—"

"Cathal O'Dwyer?"

"It could be. He has the Leinster tongue. He is dying, I fear."

"Dying?"

"Shot through the body."

"Who did it?"

"He will not say. All he will say is: 'Bring me David Gordon—I will see David Gordon—and he is holding his life with his two hands."

"Is Cosby of Cong here?"

"No—not in Athenree, dead or alive."

My poor Cathal! He had failed in his vengeance, and now, dying, it still possessed him, and he would bequeath it to me. Cosby, no doubt, had guarded the women to Athlone. I was tired of Cosby. I had no desire any more to hold him at sword-point. But O'Dwyer was my true friend and must be seen. And whatever task he might put on me, that would I do—or die.

I was staggering on long unstable legs, and Donal had an arm around me.

"I will see him," I insisted.

"Surely, brother, but not shamelessly."

They helped me on with my clothes, and we went out on the east wall, Donal on the glacis-side and holding my arm, Tadg and the priest behind. It was again a fine, brisk October morning, with the sun in a high frail sky and an east wind blowing the smoke away from us. Athenree was still smoldering. Here and there a stone house stood, but all the clay and wooden huts were burned down to fragments of walls and smoking litter. The kerns were busy searching out spoil, but the main force of gallowglasses was camped in the plain outside the Castle, and a great drove of cattle was being already herded northwards towards the woods. The houses below the north wall, where the culverin had been heaved into the ditch, were still whole, this part of the place having been taken in the first onfall, and the house of the Welshwoman, our landlady, had not even been looted.

She came hurrying down from the attic and was glad to see me. She, too, had grown fond of Cathal O'Dwyer—he was so quiet and gentle, she said, and gave no trouble. "He is dying, Master Gordon," she told me. "There is no more blood in him."

Donal helped me to his door and left me, and, as one should do in a chamber of death, I took off my bonnet as I entered.

CATHAL was lying under his cloak on the trestle-bed, and I thought he was already dead. There was no color in him, not even on his lips, and the bones of his face stood out against the drawn skin. But that face was set austerely, invincibly, in some proud calm of its own, and those steadfast eyes could not be blinded by the blank stare of death. His hands clasped each other across his breast, and the knuckle-bones stood out like strong bosses. I sank down beside him on my knees.

"Cathal, Cathal, my brother," I whispered. "Who hurt you?"

His lips formed the words, and I held my ears close. "Be not minding that now." Every word was quietly slow and drawn carefully. "All is well with me at last. My heart broke in me that day in Dublin—and Cathal O'Dwyer was only a dead man, not resting. I want you to listen to me now, for there is not much time, and I am keeping Colum waiting for me over there." His eyes sought the foot of the bed, and my hair lifted.

"Listen, David. Donn Maguire was taken to the Castle last night, and this is the message that he sent to me for you by a woman Breedh: 'The one you know will be waiting for you in the Glen of the Echo, and a message will be wait-

ing for you in the township of Bellaghy.' Say that after me. 'The one you know—'"

I said it, word for word, and content warmed his cold eyes.

"My work is done at last," he whispered.

"No, Cathal, no! Who did this to you?"

"Searching for you, he found me here—"

"Cosby?"

"But it was the good turn he did me—me, a dead man walking. Listen now again, brother. All that seeking of mine was folly. Let it stop with me. I take back your word. Do not you be minding Cosby. He and you and I are in the hands of God, and let us not be struggling in that nest. Are you heeding me?"

"I am." But, indeed, I was not.

He looked at me long. "Ah well! I can do no more." His voice came strong. "I will come now, O'More."

His hands loosed, and one of them sought mine. It was colder than clay, but the fingers pressed mine firmly. And then he died. The life he had held so calmly strong went out of him quieter than a breath. I did not know that he was dead yet awhile. His face did not change, his breath made no sound, his eyes were as calm as the sky. Then his lips parted and his fingers loosed, and I knew that he was gone.

I stood looking down at him and his death possessed me. For all the advice that he had given me my mind was set on him, on the bitterness of his days and the pity of his death. He was better at rest. Surely his heart was broken that day in Dublin, and he had been no more than a ghost driven by an urge that in the end failed. I felt extraordinarily bitter. This man had been treated unfairly—by Fate and by man. By man! by one man. In my mind's eye I saw the tossed flaxed hair of Cosby and his pale eyes and his mouth laughing without humor. And with that face in mind my teeth grated and I had no prayer to say.

I walked out of the room and found my three friends at the head of the stairs, and the Welshwoman on the steps below them.

"He is dead," I told them through shut teeth.

The old priest was watching me with anxious looks.

"I am sorry, Senan," I said to him. "There was not time."

"I saw him this morning early," said he. "Did you get his word?"

"It can wait," said I shortly, and went down the stairs.

BUT up on the crown of the wall the three of them came round me so that I could not move. They were very gentle and firm, as good men are with a sick child. Fine they knew that the dead man's word concerned me closely, and they knew that, in my then state, I was not fit to handle it.

"What is it, cousin?" Donal asked, his hand on me.

"Will any of you tell me where I can find Cosby?" I asked back. I am not an obstinate man, nor am I a vindictive one, but the clout on the head must have been working on me. It set all my humor on one road and closed down on that.

"Did your message concern Cosby?" the priest queried quickly.

"He is my concern now. I will find him under the mountains at the world's end."

"What did the dead man say to you, jewel of my heart?"

I looked at the old man and said my piece carefully as I remembered it: "The word was from Donn Maguire, and it was that a message would be waiting for me in the township of Bellaghy, and that one I know would be waiting for me in the Glen of the Echo."

After that the three of them took no notice of me for a while. I might not have been there. They closed in and talked, and I stood leaning against the shelter wall, my eyes on the ground, and little fumes of hot mist curling across my sight. And I paid but little heed to what they said about a man that, somehow, was a stranger to me.

The thing that had to be done had to be done at once—Donal was certain of that. If Ormonde in Dublin had sent an army to Clifford or a fleet came round

to Galway, Hugh Roe would avoid that scissors-hold and fall back on the North. There was no time to lose, and today there was an open road. Then take your two hundred—this was Tadg—and the O'Flaherty will not be ferocious. Father Senan was wiser. That would be a waste of time. A big force must go round head of Corrib, and there was no need for fighting. The way was open across the loch, and a few men moving boldly would be credited with strength behind them.

A few men! The fewer the better, said Donal, and that few here—but would the man be fit to ride? Fit as he would be for a week—and a week was a year—and a man with a head like that was not a child to be killed. . . .

But I was thinking thoughts of my own, and suddenly cried out. "If ye will not tell me, Vaughan will. I will go to Vaughan."

They had to give me my way that far.

We found Vaughan in his own quarters above the arch, lying comfortably enough on his own bed. Ned Billing opened the door to us. A skillful bonesetter of O'Donnell's had joined the broken bones, and one leg was a thick packet of splints and linen strips. Vaughan's face was pale and weary, but the sound strong bones of cheek and jaw had not weakened. He greeted me with a smile as I bent close and looked into his eyes.

"Out of the wilderness ye again smote us!" he murmured.

"Tell me, fine man of the English," I put to him, "why would you and I be always hurting each other?"

"Because one of us was on the wrong side, my friend. It is our luck, and luck is a woman—and for a woman, though not the same, we both fight." He caught my sleeve and drew me nearer. "I missed your Ferrara early in the evening. Tom Pybus was killed in the fight."

"Ah-h! I was the death of him the fourth time. Will God judge him kindly?"

"His meed." He drew me still closer. "There is something I should like you to know. Dame Bevinda is not gone to Athlone. She has taken herself back to Corrib. You will know—"

"I know nothing now till I find the man Cosby. Where is he?"

He did not answer me for a long time.

"Friend," said I, "if you know, you will not hide it from me this hour."

"Where your lady is he will not be far away."

"It is so, then?" I turned to Donal behind me. "I will come with ye now, cousin. Where is my sword?"

CHAPTER XXVI

KILLER'S RECKONING

I HAVE no clear memory of that second ride to Corrib, for I was out of my head all that day and some of the next. First I made a pother because they mounted me on a strange horse instead of on my own mare Benmee, and they had to be very patient in persuading me that she had been killed before Sligo.

"Sligo! but that was a long time ago," I wondered. "I was there, and Tadg here was singing a fine song."

"I was so," agreed Tadg, "and I wearing a blackcock's feather."

So I mounted the strange horse, and off we set, the four of us, Father Senan leading, and Donal and Tadg at either side of my crupper.

They tell me that I said no word all that ride till we came to the township of Bellaghy; that I let my reins hang loose so that Donal had to touch my horse occasionally to keep it on the road, and that over and over, endlessly, I kept whistling a small piece of a gay tune that they had never heard before, but that I could never get the turn of it right—until, at last, Donal found himself whistling with me and lifting to the turn and going off the tune in the same way.

It was near dark when we came to Bellaghy hamlet, but no man waited there for us, with a message. They decided to stay there that night, and Murrigan O'Flaherty Dhu gave us a kindly welcome. He knew who we were by now, and his hospitality was no less because of that.

It appears that the first words I said were: "Man Flaherty, I left a fine new undershirt on a bush in this place five or ten years ago." And he flushed in some discomfort, whereon I put my hand round his shoulders: "Fine man, you are welcome—it is over the kindest heart within the four seas."

All I remember clearly of Bellaghy is that I did not sleep in it that night. Still I had sense enough to lie quiet in the dark and not trouble the old friar, who lay near me.

Twice in the night I felt his hand on me, and once he put on a cool, fresh bandage. In the dawn, when he was sleeping, I went out into the morning, but my head was too heavy and dazed to be cleared, even by the fresh dawn wind.

As I stood bare-legged out in the open a dog barked and a man in a hurry came in at the other end of the village, a mountain man without cloak or head-covering.

I waited for him, but he stopped a good ten paces away, as was only natural considering my appearance. "Is one David Gordon in this place?" he called.

"David Gordon! I do think that the ugly man is here somewhere—there was a message for him."

"It is with me."

"Wait, now, and I will see."

I turned, and there was Father Senan in the door. "There is a message for David Gordon," I explained. "Where . . . ? Oh! But am I not that fellow?" The mountain man was frightened and doubtful.

"God be good to us all!" he prayed.

"All is well, my son," the priest encouraged him. "What is your message?"

"There is a boat waiting, and I am to take ye to the mouth of the Glosha—and after that ye will go where ye know. There is a hurry."

"We will go, then," said the priest.

SO WE crossed the loch, a sheen of silver in that still fall day, but I had no eyes for the lovely islanded wide reaches of the bay of Cong. They were fixed downwards on the hide bottom of the coracle, and I kept dully wondering if this stream of Glosha we were seeking flowed down out of Glen Rinnes—no! Glounamaol—but where, then, was the Glen of the Echo that I had in my dreams?

Going up by the burn-side, I was sore puzzled.

"Why am I here?" I wondered aloud. "This way leads to a land of youth hid in the wilderness—and that is no place for a man in torment—nor for a cheerless laughter. Cosby is never in this place. This place is for quiet, not for drawn swords and the chill song of them. I was here aforetime with one I know—and there was a man fine-hearted who thought he could fish—"

"True for you, son," murmured the priest. "He only thought it."

"That is he speaking, Senan, fisher of men."

"God bring us luck at the end of this road," prayed he troubledly, "or some one will be in the dark valley."

In time we came up over the tilt of Glounamaol into the mouth of the Glen of the Echo, and there the priest put his shoulder back against my breast, halting me, and Donal and Tadg bunched in close to us.

"A wasp's nest we are landed in," he cried. "See the crowd at the bothy?"

"Not more than half a score," said Tadg of the long sight.

But I could not see all that distance. The great slopes of hill shimmered and danced before my eyes; above the purple hump of Maam the loop of a rainbow twisted and twined tormentingly across the sky, and ribbons of hot vapor curled up out of the valley, where the singing of the water was sadder than dreams.

"We should not be here," I whispered, "but let us on. There is a valley of stones beyond that will suit us better—where we can hide till brain burns cold. Hush! here is the echo-point, and the happy people might hear us."

"Up with us!" cried Donal in his indomitable clarion voice. "Let us remember our clan and our name. We carry this thing through—or truly we die. March on!"

We marched on, and made no pause till we came up on the green level before

the bothy. There we halted.

Dame Bevinda was there, and with her Duvesa MacTheobald of the dove hair, and ten men of the O'Flaherty clan. The deer-flenching gallows had been knocked over and riven apart, and the men were gathered round one of its limbs; they were about to use it as a ram to batter down the bothy door.

But at that time I did not see the Dame or Duvesa, or the men about the ram. All I saw was Cosby. He was there.

I TURNED to Donal, and placed a hand against his breast. "Donal," said I, "do not let anybody stop me."

He says my eyes, that used to be brown, had turned yellow deep under brow and that the bosses of my cheeks had become hard marble.

"Cousin," I said again, "do not let anybody stop me."

"No one under the sky," he said, iron in his voice.

I swung away from him, and Andrea Ferrara came out in the light of the sun. Some one had cleaned it after the sack of Athenree, and now it shone with a blue happy wickedness, and it whimpered shrill as it came from scabbard. Oh! but the cold song of it made me strong and light as a leopard. I spurned the ground; when my feet lifted they did not want to come to earth again. Donal tells me that, in truth, I swayed from knee to shoulder and moved forward like a man weary and in no hurry, but that my face and the look in my eyes would frighten the Fianne, the ancient fighting troops of Erin; that men shrank aside from me, and no hand went to blade. And there was Dame Bevinda O'Flaherty before me.

"Would you dare to the end, a Gordon?" said she.

"Woman of the great heart," said I, "this thing had to be. Forgive me, now."

Gently I put her aside with one hand, and there was Cosby facing me, and his sword still in sheath.

"We meet for the last time, Captain Sir William Cosby," I said, giving him his full title. "It was meant from the day you slew my friend. Draw your sword."

He stood looking at me out of his light eyes, his teeth showing mirthlessly.

"Oh, cheerless laughter!" I cried. "Laugh now. This is the end of all roads. Make your peace with Colum O'More and Cathal O'Dwyer. With me you make no peace on top of earth. Draw!"

It happened very quickly. He saw me there, swaying on my feet, head bandaged, face dead white, sword lax in my hand. Now was the time to kill. They say his blade came out in one mighty sweep and, in the same motion, slashed like a streak at my neck. But to me that blade was slow as sway of a branch in the wind and as soft as the stroke of a reed. I had to wait for it until it came from behind his shoulder. And there my blade locked on it like a curl of light, twisted over and under it, and leaped forward in one clean shoulder-driven lunge—through open mouth and through spine. The guard jarred against his teeth. He fell backwards. I recovered blade with a single wrench, and swung on the O'Flaherty men.

"Who dies now?"

No one made the smallest move. It was all over.

I waited. A great weakness flowed over me; the world rocked; hilt slipped from loosed fingers; I should have fallen. But it was as if a clean strong wind came about me to hold me up. A rustle of skirts, a cry, a pair of strong young arms, and there was my Eithne holding me.

"David—David!"

I placed arm round her shoulder and leaned on her.

"Eithne," I cried, "I was needing you. It is you I am needing. Do not let them hurt me any more."

"No more, dear. No one—no one will hurt you any more."

Dame Bevinda had the last word.

"Sad days!" she cried. "Sad days when the O'Flahertys are dared on their own ground. They need a man. Let it be."

THE END

"No, you don't," he said.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN JASPER

By LOUIS G. GOLDSMITH

HOW Billy Boy ever happened to land in our midst none of us could understand, but one look at his fresh, earnest young face was enough to convince us that he was misplaced. Of course there were his father's bankruptcy debts—which explanation was too goofy for any of us, even Duke Thomas, to savvy.

But Duke said that was merely an immediate cause. Why the typical son of an old Boston family which worshipped its family tree, should suddenly kick over the traces, turn down an assistant professorship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and go in for flying in the first place, and then come to fly in the Orient, especially

in China during 1937 and '38—that was the mystery. As Duke said later, when he was lying on a straw mattress in the Tanshein hospital with two machine-gun bullet holes through his collar bone. It must have been Jasper.

Billy Boy arrived before the Japs took Nanking and made it a hell on earth, with massacred non-combatants stacked so high around the city gates that we could see the piles of them from our combat planes at ten thousand feet. While the Japs were doing that, Billy Boy took our best plane, a Danter pursuit with two thirty-caliber wing guns and a fifty-caliber, synchronized to shoot through the prop, and flew it over to Hankow, leaving five of us Americans, eight Chinese pilots and four men of other nationalities to chew the fat in the air with thirty-seven Jap pursuit ships.

It wasn't that Billy Boy didn't know how to fly. He'd recently been graduated from the U. S. Army air schools, than which no better exist on earth or in the sky. It was simply that he didn't have the iron in him, and when I say that I don't exactly mean nerve.

Duke Thomas and me, Ted Wright, were sitting in some wicker chairs we'd had the boys fix for us on the shady side of the airfield hut, sipping our Scotch sodas, when Billy Boy first showed on the scene. Duke, who is a stickler for dress at all times, was wearing a freshly chalked sun helmet, clean linen shorts and one sock and shoe. His left big toe had been clipped by a machine-gun bullet a couple of days before and it was bandaged so he had to wear a slipper on it. As for me, I had on my shoes and socks and a pair of striped underwear shorts. That and a linen rag so I could keep the sweat from running down into my eyes.

"I believe," Duke said, gently shaking his lukewarm drink as though he expected to hear the tinkle of ice, "that I shall give up drinking for a while. Very, very bad for the eyes."

Duke Thomas, if his name really was Thomas, was a handsome devil. Dark, with a long, oval face, a tiny dash of a mustache above a large, quiet mouth and the finest set of teeth I've ever seen. When he says one thing he usually means something else. Me, I lack six inches of his six feet, and my face is not much to look at, even if you don't count in the nose which I smashed up pretty bad in a crackup, back in '23. I gave Duke a suspicious look.

"Your lovely orbs of vision weren't troubling you any when you shot down that Jap bomber over Shanghai, day before yesterday," I remarked. "Or are you lookin' for compliments."

"No," Duke shook his head regretfully, "I'm looking at something down the road which I know doesn't exist. When one does that, then one should do something about it."

I turned my head, and that was the first time I saw Billy Boy.

I DIDN'T see him first pop. Just evidences of him. A number-one boy leading an imposing procession, fanning himself. Then two bamboo coolies, a large trunk swinging between their heavy bamboo carrying pole; two more coolies with three suitcases likewise dangling on their pole; a rickshaw coolie sweating between the shafts of his light, two-wheeled carriage; two beggars on each side of the carriage with fans and, as a sort of grand climax, Billy Boy, reclining gracefully in spotless linens, enjoying the breeze from the beggars' fans.

He looked at us as though trying to decide whether we were customers of the place or just working there.

"How do you stop them?" he wanted to know then, looking wildly at the porters, who continued along with their swinging trot, whining a coolie chant to lighten their loads.

"*Cheh dz ting ee keh!*" Duke shouted and the procession immediately stopped, the bamboo coolies lowering their burdens to wipe their saffron faces.

"Light and rest your feet, stranger," I suggested, looking him over. He was about five-ten high, well built; had light hair and a pink, chubby face with dimples in each cheek. His eyes were wide and gray and steady.

"I'm William Wentley Wens," he introduced himself. "I'm to be the foreign aviation adviser here."

"Delighted," Duke said, standing on his good foot and managing a deep bow without losing his balance, "allow me to introduce Theodore Grant Sherman Wright and my humble self, just plain Duke Thomas. We also have the honor of being foreign aviation advisers."

Wens swallowed the two inside names that Duke had given me without a blink, but seemed puzzled that we should be aviation advisers.

"Just a polite name for hired air-going butchers," Duke explained breezily and shouted at the boy to bring another chair and drinks around. "All of we foreign barbarians are advisers and I'm a sort of number-one boy for the American gang."

Wens sat down in the chair that had been brought him.

"But I'm different," he told us. "I'm to instruct and advise students. I wouldn't consider fighting. That is, fighting for pay." He took one sip of the drink, then made a wry face and put it on the table.

"Sorry we have no ice," Duke said, studying Wens.

"Oh, it's not that," Wens reassured him. "I just don't drink—drink whiskey."

"Let's get this straight," Duke frowned. "You don't intend to fly against the Japanese?"

"Why, of course not," Wens said. "If you gentlemen care to, it may be all right for you. But to me . . . well, it would be just the same as murder. I wouldn't have come here at all if it hadn't been for a debt of honor."

Duke swayed his tall glass, listening to an imaginary clinking of ice.

"Oh, I see," he muttered, staring at the dragon design that was etched on the glass. Then he sat it down, untouched, on the table. "Lend me the aid of your stalwart shoulder, Ted," he requested, "and we'll show the boys where to stow Mr. William Wentley Wens' duffle."

On the way to the dormitory Duke talked with the number-one coolie. It seems that Wens, after an expansive investigation of transportation costs at the Nanking depot, had hired the coolies at a ridiculously low price, even in this country, where human labor is much cheaper than animal or machinery.

"But is rich *sha* man," the coolie said knowingly, "allie same you. We catchie cumshaw."

After the stuff was stowed away Duke tossed a couple of Mex dollars to the number-one boy. "It's just possible that Billy Boy might not cough up," he explained to me briefly. "Forget what he said about murder, Ted. We don't want him to get off on the wrong foot.

BUT it seemed as though that was the only kind of a foot Billy Boy possessed. That night at chow Bonus Bentley stood up, raising his glass. We had a good crowd of boys—Chinese, Americans, English, Italians and whatnot—and everybody talked at once and talked loud to be heard above the high, singsong and throat grunts of the Chinese. It was literally a Babel of speech, but toasts had precedence over all other business, for they were usually given in honor of a dead friend or to one of the boys who had knocked down an enemy plane. The room became silent as Bentley stood with raised glass.

"Here's to murder," he proposed, his thin lips curling over the words. "May it prosper and pay well." He was looking toward Billy Boy.

Glasses, half raised to lips, thumped down on the plank table top. Wholesale murder was going on in Shanghai, an hour away by air. It was nothing to joke about.

Peanuts, the little cockney Englishman, jumped to his feet. "I'll just arsk you, Mr. Bentley, to explain—"

"Pipe down!" Duke ordered. It was a rough gang and Thomas, unofficially, was responsible for the Americans. "You're drunk, Bonus. I'll talk with you tonight."

Bentley pointed a trembling finger toward Wens. "That guy—"

Duke pushed his six feet of well-made body up out of his chair. "I'll talk with you tonight, Bonus," he said meaningly.

"Okay," Bonus said in a sulky voice, and sat down.

Conversation immediately swept over the room like an ocean wave breaking over rocks, and the incident was forgotten.

I don't know what Duke said to Bonus that night, but it smoothed things down for a week or more. They really needed instructors then, so Wens was given six Chinese who had finished ground school, and told to get them ready for solo work. His pay was three hundred and fifty gold per month, with keep. The combat pilots got a thousand gold a month and five thousand dollars bonus for every Jap they knocked out of the sky.

When I happened to mention this to him, Wens' chubby face lost its dimples and his small mouth tightened. He shook his head slowly.

"It doesn't seem right," he complained. "Just because I won't go out and murder people. Why, if I got that much I could pay the debt in ten months!" Then he told me all about his father's bankruptcy. He knew to a dollar what the debt was, and how much more it would be next year with a six per cent interest charge, and the next year after that.

"But your old man's dead," I protested, "and if he was just one of the officers in the company and if it went through bankruptcy you don't owe a red cent."

He looked at me and shook his head sadly.

"Of course you wouldn't understand," he said, "but we Wens always pay our debts."

The lad was just a little short on tact, eh? Also of a sense of humor.

I left him explaining things to his Chinese flying class by means of pantomime, and as I passed by the machine shop I saw Mike, the Australian chief mechanic, glaring down at the dissembled parts of an Italian motor that lay on the floor. His left cheek protruded with the customary hunk of chewing tobacco and he shot a thick stream of brown juice over the crankcase. He spoke in a high, falsetto voice.

"We Wens," he announced, "never let nothin' hip us. Ah Ling, go get me a handful of files an' the big sledge. We'll get this bloody jigsaw puzzle together yet."

That afternoon Bonus Bentley got his first ship, a two-motored bomber, and his bullets found their mark before it had a chance to lay eggs on the poor devils around the North Station. Naturally he got drunk that night.

Duke Thomas proposed the toast, all of us standing with our glasses raised.

"To old Bent, our beloved comrade, better known as Bonus, and when he finally gets his Jap bonus let his bones rest in peace with his esteemed ancestors."

All present cheered and shouted in a half dozen different tongues. All but Wens. He had refused to stand and drink the toast.

Bonus got up and bowed with drunken gravity.

"We Wens," he said modestly, "always gets our man."

But things like that didn't disturb Billy Boy in the least. To him, Bonus Bentley was but a sparrow, dropping something on Washington's monument.

Chow toasts were frequent after that, and most of them reflected the indiscretions of Billy Boy's tongue, for to him the Wens family was an outstanding American institution. He spoke of it often and without false modesty.

"To great great grandfather Wens," Peanut, the cockney proposed, "who, ga' bli'me, licked the blarsted English at Valley Fudge, or some place."

"Valley Forge," Billy Boy politely corrected him and bowed acknowledgement to the toast.

And, another night: "Hal, when yuh going to pay me that fifty bucks?"

Hal Swevers, thundering above all other voices: "Don't you worry about that, Tip. We Wens always pay our debts."

WENS unconsciously furnished us with so many laughs that he became almost popular. And as an instructor he was a whiz. Maybe it was because the Chinese students didn't understand his lingo and he couldn't very well tell them about the great Wens family by sign language. However it was, all six of his

students were making solo flights within two weeks, and most of their landings were good.

And by that time we had pieced together the entire history of the Wens family back almost as far as William the Conqueror, which, I understand, is the point of take-off for most old families. A couple of them had come over on the Mayflower, which, it seems, was the correct thing to do. It usually ended up on some refrain such as: "We Wens always pay our debts." However, there was one member of the Wens family whom Billy Boy did not mention. We'd never have learned about old rip-snorter Jasper had it not been for the damaged envelope which brought a letter to Billy Boy from his mother.

But all that was before the Japs moved in on Nanking. We'd had several raid scares, such as the time when they boasted that a three or four-hundred plane bombing armada was coming over to flatter the capitol city. The Occidental governments were horrified that any civilized country would even think of such a thing, but the Chinese knew their neighbors and Cantonese pilots ferried practically every ship they had up to reinforce our squadrons. All but the foreign settlement of Shanghai had been flattened to smoking ruins by now and every day saw more and more Jap planes in the sky, and they were venturing closer to Nanking all the time.

The old carefree days were over now, and nerves were getting strained. The Chinese pilots were taking the brunt of it—not because the foreigners were afraid to fight but because most of them were old hands at the game and knew the value of that old saying: " 'Tis better to fight and run away, and live to fight another day." The Chinese aren't hotheaded exactly. They don't curse the Japs and get in a big lather, but if one Chinese pilot is up in the air and spots a half dozen Jap ships he's more than apt to start at them like a ton of brick and get his seat pumped full of lead.

Most of our ground equipment had been moved up to Hankow, and we were making a last, hopeless stand against overwhelming odds. The morning before we were scheduled to pull out for the Hankow field three of our best Chinese pilots were shot down trying to drive a large bombing squadron away from the city, and that afternoon another Chinese and poor old Peanut, the little cockney, were shot down while doing combat with some Jap pursuits near the airfield.

DUKE THOMAS gave me the high sign to make the toast at chow that evening. To save my life I couldn't think of a damned thing that would sound right, so I just got up and raised my glass and said nothing. But all of the boys knew what I meant. We had lost five brothers—and they *were* brothers, regardless of their color or the shape of their eyes. Nobody was thinking of bonus money now. Nor about old pagodas, or temples or things like that that were being destroyed. It was the millions of honest, hardworking, simple-minded coolies who could be happy and quietly jolly on so very little and who were having that little taken from them.

The boys stood up silently and raised their glasses. And then I saw Duke's eyes blazing in a white, set face. He stood up and kicked his stool behind him so that it crashed through the flimsy partition wall, and he crossed over to where Wens was still sitting and grabbed him by his shirt.

"Stand up and drink, you white-livered whelp!" he gritted, jerking the man to his feet.

Wens stood, or rather, dangled, with his arms hanging limply at his sides.

"I don't drink," he said distinctly. "And if I did, I wouldn't drink a toast to murder."

We all stood there with our glasses extended and stared at the two. I felt exactly like I did years ago when, for the first time, I looked over my shoulder and saw a diving airplane almost on top of me and the tracer bullets making white slits in the sky.

And then something happened to all of us. Billy Boy's wide, steady eyes passed slowly from face to face and we knew that he was completely aware of his danger. That he realized he was surrounded by wild, insane beasts and

not men. It drained the anger from us like magic.

Hal Swevers' drawling voice broke the frozen silence.

"Personally, Duke," he said, "I'm particular who I drink with. Please let go of that—that thing you're holding there."

The next day Billy Boy took the Danter pursuit without orders and flew it over to the Hankow military field, leaving the rest of us to do the best we could against a whole swarm of the enemy.

And if you think he was court-martialed and shot at sunrise the following morning you don't know a thing about the Chinese. His citizenship was in good standing. He hadn't joined the Chinese army nor done combat work and this might have protected him a little bit, but mostly he was protected by the funny way that the Chinese think.

They were actually able to see his viewpoint! And another thing was that the Chinese have a strong feeling against what they call "breaking a man's rice bowl." It's a sort of "live and let live" idea, and is strictly adhered to as long as the other fellow shows good intentions. And Wens had worked like a dog to train their young flyers and, compared to the rest of us, he hadn't asked much money for doing it.

But from then on there was no more foolishness about "we Wens." So far as the foreigners were concerned he became something that didn't exist in our dimension. When Duke Thomas, Hal Swevers and I were put on detached service near Tanshein to protect the south end of the Hankow-Peiping railroad from bombing raids we discussed the possibility of trusting him with an old Fokker Universal to haul supplies to us. Billy Boy was right there at the chow table during the discussion but a stranger would have been unaware of the fact.

"If he undertakes the mission, we can trust him with it," Duke said. "I'll post the order on the board tomorrow and he can decide for himself."

One of the Cantonese pilots flew in a load of mail early the next morning before we left for Tanshein and Bonus Bentley started sorting it out. One of the envelopes was damaged and the letter fell out into Bentley's lap.

"Look at this!" he called, to Duke and me. One of the sheets of the letter had opened itself out in his lap and he was reading it, unashamed.

I glanced over his shoulder and Duke must have seen the same words that caught my eyes, for otherwise he wouldn't have stooped to a thing like reading another's letter. It was page two:

" . . . . . those horrible murderers. It must be that one bad strain in the Wens' blood, Jasper Algon Wens, from the New York branch of the family. He married such a fine, spiritual woman. She told in her diary how she had prayed and prayed over him when he first showed a restless streak. But he disappeared, poor woman—I mean, Jasper disappeared, and when next heard from he was master of a pirate ship. How you could have thrown away that wonderful opportunity at the Institute to go off to the Army and learn to fly and then gone to that wicked, heathen country to kill innocent people, I cannot understand. As you say, it is your moral family duty to pay the debt, for the Wens always pay their debts, and it would take many years to do it with what you could save from a teacher's pay. But you also have your duty to me and to the Wens name. It must be the Jasper in you that causes you to do such things and I can only hope that. . . ."

The three of us looked at each other. We didn't have to see who the letter was addressed to.

Duke's voice broke the silence. It was slow and musing, as though he were telling us of something he could see in a crystal ball:

"She is frail and dresses in dull black and has snow white hair pulled tight and done in a little knot on top of her head. She sits very straight in a rocking chair and has a large, thin nose and a small, selfish mouth. And her voice is high and thin and trembles a little because she feels so sorry for herself and," his voice

hardened, "she's been whining the greatness of the Wens family all of her narrow, useless life."

I found myself nodding in agreement. That letter was a dead give away to the character of its author. I couldn't help feeling a little sorry for Billy Boy. He'd had to live with that sort of thing most of his life. Bonus found the envelope and replaced the letter, and Duke and I started pulling on our flying suits. Winter was on us and it was getting chilly upstairs.

TANSHEIN had a large temple ground with several temples, their up-curved eaves nestling in quaint evergreens that revealed portions of dark red lacquer and ancient gold leaf decorations. A couple or three pagodas were scattered around the town. There was the small compound of an American mission, a few blocks of modern business houses, the government building, newly constructed and tiled with vivid blue, and then the customary flat, dreary stretches of mud and wattle huts on the outskirts. A fifty-thousand population Western city would cover the same space but there were probably a half-million people in Tanshein. The town was of no military importance except for the railroad between Hankow and Peiping, supplying troops who were holding back the Japanese advancing south from Peiping.

Things went along quietly for three days, but on the fourth, while I was on the early morning patrol, I spotted three bombers approaching from the southeast. I turned my tail to them before they saw me and shoved the throttle forward, heading for the Tanshein field. I circled three or four times until I saw the boys dragging Duke's and Swevers' planes out of the hangar and then I started climbing to get altitude for the pursuits, which I knew would be flying high above the bombers. According to our plan Duke would come up to join me and Swevers would drive off the bombers.

I was flying a three-year-old Hornet-powered Waldoon pursuit ship, but it was as good as most of the things the Japs had copied from Western aircraft builders. Climbing, I flew east toward the rising sun and passed under the five-ship pursuit formation that was convoying the bombers. They didn't see me and I kept on flying east, climbing. Pretty soon I was on a level with them so I turned northwest, toward them, still climbing. I would be coming out of the sun and wasn't worried that they'd see me now. Pretty soon I spotted Duke's plane, humping itself for altitude and about that time one ship of the Jap formation dipped its nose downward in a long dive toward my friend, thinking, of course, that Duke didn't know they were there and wouldn't see him until the last minute, on account of the sun.

The other four ships continued on until they were sure that Duke was alone. Then they started to dive on him in formation. But I started at the same time. I held my fire until the Jap ship on the left wing of the formation was within a hundred feet and the turtleback was centered in my ring sight. Then I squeezed both triggers on my joystick and the two Lewis guns started shivering in their mounts. Every fifth shot was a tracer and when the white streaks reached the nose of the lead ship I released the triggers and hauled the stick back for a loop.

The west horizon disappeared and after an instant of looking at the ground that appeared to be above my head the east horizon seemed to throw itself up to meet my wings. One of the formation ships had fallen out of control and the pilot was floating down on a parachute. The other three ships were streaking it toward the rising sun. Duke, far below, was milling around and around with the other pursuit and that could mean only one thing for the Jap. He was practically on his way to that extra special heaven reserved exclusively for the Japanese.

Hal Swevers had scared the bombers away from the railroad and was still chasing them. They had dumped a few eggs in passing over it at right angles and missed that hundred-to-one chance they had of hitting it. Tanshein was right below them so, I guess mostly to lighten their loads, they emptied their bomb racks near the center of the town

and started after the boys who were supposed to have protected them.

Like a darned fool I wasn't satisfied with my work. I had to go down and strafe them for good measure, and one of the rear-cockpit gunners made my tail group look like last year's moth-eaten undershirt. I was lucky to get the crate back to the airfield.

Duke was already on the field when I landed, and we were looking over my sad looking ship when Hal came lurching over the field like a drunken sailor and pancaked his ship down thirty feet. The landing gear caved in like it was made of toothpicks and when he ran out Hal looked up at us with a sickly grin and then slumped forward onto his safety belt. He'd gotten three machine gun bullets through his left hip and the bucket seat was clear full of blood.

We lifted him into the old field car and just then heard and saw something that to us was like a sail to shipwrecked mariners. It was the Danter pursuit!

It landed and taxied up to the hangar with snarling bursts from the great, double-row radial and I felt like giving three of those well-known huzzas. The pilot cut his switches and climbed out and took off his parachute. Then he came over toward us. It was Billy Boy!

"I was ordered to ferry it over," he said briefly, pointing at the Danter and not bothering to say "hello". "There it is. Tommy Fang is bringing the Fokker to take me back."

"You'll take the Fokker back alone," Duke said. "Tommy can stay and fly Ted's ship when we get it patched up. When you get back to Hankow tell them how things are with us here and maybe they can send a better pilot.

"That's murder!" Wens exclaimed. "Tommy Fang hasn't done more than two weeks solo work."

Duke shrugged. "He'll jump at the chance," he predicted. "And speaking of murder, why don't you ride into the hospital with Ted and Hal?"

Wens looked at Duke with a puzzled frown. "I don't see what that would have to do with murder." But he shrugged his shoulders and climbed in beside the driver. I rode in the back, trying to keep Hal from being bumped around any more than necessary.

WE SAW the first bomb crater near the Pagoda-of-the-winds. It had struck at the edge of the Coolie Market. There was a strip of road left just wide enough for us to get around, but it was covered with bleeding fragments of bodies. A gang was busy dragging these into a pile and the number-one boy came over to our car while we were waiting for the road to be cleared. I gave him an American cigarette and he said how very bad it was that the great American brave pilot had been wounded. Hal was conscious now and it bucked him up a lot to be called "the great American brave pilot." Chinese are clever that way.

"Mebbe-so short time catchie plenty more," the Chinese observed, looking up in the sky.

I felt kind of shivery along my spine. Some way or other news of things reaches the Chinese coolie class before we hear any of it.

"Why will there be more?" I asked, trying to learn something from his smooth, expressionless face.

He bent and picked up a fragment of a naked foot and leg. He examined it for a moment impersonally, then tossed it across the hood of the car to the far side of the road. Fine drops of blood sprayed on the windshield.

"General Sun Kan Soy townside," he stated, as though that should explain his fear of more bomb raids.

The road was cleared presently, but we had to make several detours around other bomb craters before reaching the hospital, and the sights weren't exactly pleasant. All the cots in the hospital were occupied by now but they were putting mattresses on the floor and we made Hal as comfortable as possible in there. The place looked more like a slaughter house than a hospital. Billy Boy was silent all the way back to the airfield and I thought maybe he'd gotten another slant on this murder business.

But when Tommy Fang flew in a couple of hours later Wens threw his para-

chute into the cabin of the Fokker and made preparations to leave. Clouds had been forming in the sky and there were only a few large blue spots left.

"You'd better wait until it clears up," Duke advised Wens.

"I can fly worse weather than this with my eyes shut," Billy Boy retorted.

"I'm not talking about bad weather," Duke replied evenly. "I'm thinking how easy it'd be for some Japs to slip up on us through or above these clouds."

"Don't try to scare me out," Billy Boy said and pointed to the battered old cabin ship. "They're not apt to mistake that for a fighting plane."

Duke shrugged, but he had them warm up his engine, and after Wens had been gone five minutes he also took off, heading southward. They had stripped the fabric off the tail group of my Waldoon and were welding in two or three diagonal braces that had been clipped by the machine gun bullets. I started over toward the machine shop to watch this when I heard a noise like three circular saws all ripping through hard wood at the same time.

"Get that Danter out and start a fire under it!" I shouted to the mechanics, running toward the office for my helmet and goggles.

When I came out the noise was right overhead. Three silvery pursuits with red targets on their rudders were closing in on a lumbering old monoplane and at that moment their machine guns started chattering. It looked like curtains for Billy Boy. He was side-slipping toward the field, but he couldn't possibly make it before they riddled him and his ship.

Then another ship broke through the clouds and dove straight at the bunched pursuits. I thought Duke was going to ram the rearmost ship, but it slid away from him and tilted downward into a tailspin. He jerked his nose straight up then and cut his engine, standing her on the tail until she lost speed and the nose jerked down in one of those neckbreaking whipstalls.

One of the Japs kept on after Billy Boy and the other was looking around for Duke's ship when tracer bullets, like steel darning needles, jabbed at the nose cowling of his plane. A cloud of blue smoke shot back along the fuselage and then turned to scarlet, black-edged flames. The pilot clawed his way out of the cockpit and jumped free of the burning ship, opening his parachute.

By this time the old Fokker was about shot to rags and Duke was in no position to attack the last pursuit, but he pulled up in front of the Fokker in a loop, snapping out in a half barrel roll at the top of it and headed straight for the oncoming Jap with his guns blazing. It was a crazy think to do because the Jap was all set and the instant the nose of Duke's ship cut through his ring sight he could blast away like a hunter pot-shooting at birds. But it was just too much for the little brown boy. He knew it wasn't a Chinese flying that ship, and we'd shown them so many little tricks of the trade that they were always fearful of another one being pulled out of an Occidental sleeve. He turned tail and scooted in the general direction of Shanghai.

Billy Boy landed and his left wing flopped down so that the tip grooved into the earth and ground-flopped him. The mechanics left their work and ran out to his ship and started counting the bullet holes, all of them talking at once at the top of their voices. That was one ship that would never fly again!

THAT night the three of us sat down to a gloomy dinner in the hotel dining room, where the lights were all shrouded in black muslin for fear of bomb raids. Tommy Fang had gone to visit some relatives—the Chinese are always visiting relatives or having relatives visit them. Wens hadn't thanked Duke for saving his life and as soon as he had finished eating he left for his room.

I watched him stomp off toward the lobby.

"Duke," I said, "that guy hates you like poison."

Duke was rubbing his index finger over his narrow mustache.

"No," he said quietly. "It's just that . . . well, it's hard to be polite when you're fighting some other person."

Duke is always saying things like that and I'd long since given up trying to understand him.

We'd telegraphed for more ships and men, and Billy Boy came out to the field with us early the next morning, hoping they'd send a cabin ship over so he could go back to Hankow. Duke went out on the morning patrol and Wens and I spent an hour trying to be in different places at the same time. But it's hard for two white men to keep apart under such circumstances and I think that Wens really wanted to talk.

He walked up to me deliberately while I was standing near the little mud-plastered field office.

"You'll no doubt be glad to learn," he began abruptly, "that I have decided to leave China as soon as I can."

"Why, no," I said. "It's a big country and you're not tramping on my toes. I know what you think of us and you probably know what we think of you."

"No," he denied, tightening his small mouth. "You couldn't possibly know what I think."

There spoke the old, superior Wens clay. I was too gross ever to be able to understand what *they* would think.

"I came over here so I could pay a debt," he said, as though he were explaining something to a ten year old child, but wasn't real sure that he was getting it right. "That is, I thought I was coming over for that reason, but my mother may have been right. Perhaps it was something else." The last was said as though he were trying to explain things to himself.

I didn't even try to follow his reasoning. For one thing it seemed to me I was hearing the low, combined hum of many engines aloft.

"The trouble," he continued, "is that I have not only failed to earn enough money to pay the debt, but I have contracted another debt and I don't see how I'll ever be able to pay that. And the longer I stay the more chance there is of me contracting further debts. You wouldn't understand the terrible position in which I find myself, but I want to be honest and admit to a third party that Duke Thomas saved my life and that for once in its history a member of the Wens family owes a debt which . . . ."

"Shorty," I hollered, at the top of my voice. "Get that Danter out and start it!"

I ran over where the boys were working on my old Waldoon and began shoving them toward the sleek, gray-metal wing of the Danter, giving a couple of them boots in the rear to speed things. Then I raced to the ammunition shed and came back and threaded the webbed belt holding cigar-sized bullets into the fifty-caliber synchronized Browning.

Shorty jumped into the cockpit as soon as they had the wheels blocked and by the time I'd loaded the right wing gun he had the propeller turning over. The sound of that great two-rowed radial drowned out the snarling motors aloft. I jammed the block of the left gun down on the webbed ammunition belt and looped it carefully for running into the container and snapped this shut and raced past Billy Boy toward the office to get my helmet and goggles.

Coming out of the office, I paused just an instant to glance aloft. One lone ship was skittering along before a five-ship formation and behind and above that formation was another five-ship "vee." They were convoying five heavy bombers that were grumbling along not two thousand feet off the ground. I ran toward the Danter, jerking on my canvas helmet.

Wens was standing beside the Danter, and Shorty was just getting out of the cockpit. Wens had a pair of goggles in his hand. He snapped them into place as I reached the plane and lifted my toe to put it in the fuselage step.

"No you don't," he said, in a cool, quiet voice. He grabbed me by one shoulder and faced me around and his right fist flashed toward my chin.

It wasn't much of a blow but it caught me right on the angle of the jaw. I flopped backward, seeing stars.

IT SEEMED as though I'd only been out an instant when I sat up, shaking my head to get rid of the numbness in it, but it was longer than that, because the Danter was racing down the field like a

gray arrow, its motor jarring the very ground.

Above the field Duke's ship was dropping off in a falling-leaf to make the first ships overshoot him. He pulled out of this and when they turned he was on their tails in the old merry-go-round. The lead ship's propeller must have lost a blade from his gun fire, because it started into a half-barrel and then crumpled up as the motor tore loose from the nose. If they'd had sense enough to break that mill they could have taken Duke easily, because numbers do count in the air, but his tracer bullets kept slugging into the tail of the ship ahead of him until they hit a vital spot. The thing doubled up in the air and started doing flip-flops toward the ground.

Then I saw the Danter climbing steeply toward the milling ships, almost hanging on its prop and I saw the formation above start swooping. Wens passed up the lower dog fight and as the upper formation dove by he raked them with the big center gun. The lead ship went into a spin and broke into flames and the two ships on the right wing of the formation pulled up to engage him.

Never before had I realized the tremendous power that is in a modern, streamlined pursuit job. Not only the power of the engine but that of momentum, which is tremendous, once the nose is dropped.

Wens disregarded the two planes that had leveled off; instead he dove onto the ships clustered below him. Steel gray strings seemed to tie the muzzle of his center gun to the ship below; suddenly its nose pointed up into the air and it went straight down a full thousand feet on its tail before it fell into pieces. Duke's guns had blazed death into another ship and four of the five that remained scattered and then closed into a rough formation at the side.

But Wens was on them like a savage wolf dog. For the first time his wing guns laced out with their tracers, raking them as he passed. The guns went silent as he passed over them and his nose dropped straight down; then he curved upward in an outside loop and again the three guns started their staccato yammering.

Duke seemed to be in trouble with his plane. He was flying like a novice and that could mean but one thing. He'd picked up some machine-gun slugs. When he started up into one of his whipstalls to kill speed the nose fell off too soon and he was down right in front of the Jap's guns.

His ship seemed to hover in midair, shivering from the impact of the bullets; then both of its wings lashed back against the fuselage and it plummetted earthward. A moment later Duke got clear of the ruined ship and jerked his parachute rip-cord, and in the same instant the Danter pulled away from the four ships and hung on its prop under the ship above, its great center gun spitting death through the disk of its propeller. I doubt if the pilot above knew what hit him!

One of the four remaining ships was gliding toward the ground with a dead motor and the other three headed southeastward, toward Shanghai. Wens turned away from them and slanted down toward our field. Suddenly he pulled out of this glide and headed for the five large bombing planes which, unmolested, were flying along the railway, dropping their eggs.

Then he seemed to change his mind again and headed back toward the field and I turned to Shorty, the number-one mechanic.

I pointed to where Duke's parachute was just lowering him to the ground in a rice field about a mile away.

"You catchem for hospital, plenty chop-chop! You savvy?"

"Me savvy," he nodded. Then he pointed: "Looksee, Marster!"

I followed his pointing finger. Mr. William Wentley Wens was now flying *under* that bombing formation, holding the nose of his ship up at stalling speed by the sheer power of his splendid engine and raking hell out of the bombers with all three of his guns. As I watched one of them fell, and it must have fallen faster than its own bombs, because when it struck the ground it exploded

like a small ammunition dump. Another followed in its wake before the little brown chappies knew what was going on. Then they, too, headed southeastward.

GENERAL SUN KAN SOY wanted to move a couple of Chinese officers out of a private hospital room so that Hal and Duke would be more comfortable, but the boys talked him out of that. When I got there that night from the depot they were both side by side, lying on straw mattresses on the floor. But their space had been screened off with heavy, silken drapes taken from some old palace, and there were thick Peiping rugs on the floor.

Outside the door was a line of Chinese coolies, passing slowly by an old temple urn, dropping prayer papers into the flame. Three nurses hovered around outside the enclosure and another stood inside. When an old-fashioned Chinese is your friend he is so completely yours that it is frightening.

"Well, you two lugs," I greeted them cheerfully, "I see you're reaping the rewards of another's labors."

"Billy Boy left on the evening train?" Duke questioned, with his usual, uncanny insight.

"Yep," I nodded. "He's just stopping off in Hankow long enough to collect his baggage. And the damned fool says he won't take a cent of bonus money."

Duke started to chuckle, then ceased, with a subdued gasp of pain.

"He doesn't know the Chinese," he said, slowly shaking his head. "That bankruptcy debt will be paid before he gets off the ship and somehow they'll slip him the rest of the money. After all, his family tree only dates back three or four hundred years. What chance has it got against these Chinese, who can trace their families back as many thousand years?"

He carefully shifted his position to bring a thin, index finger up across his mustache.

"We won't be out murdering for some weeks, Ted," he said, "but don't forget where we are."

I suddenly remembered about the bombing ships. I told them how Billy Boy changed his mind a couple of times in the air and then ended up by shooting down a couple of them. "That was murder, the way he looked at the matter. How do you account for him doing it?"

I thought I had Duke Thomas there, but of course I was wrong. He was still stroking his silly little mustache and smiling to himself.

"That," he explained softly, "must have been Jasper."

Fear lent him wings. . . .

HELL ON THE HOOF

A Fact Story

By EWEN K. PATTERSON

TODAY the little-known north of Australia is the only part of the world where professional buffalo-hunters work practically all year round. While the buffaloes found in this region are different from those which roamed the vast plains of North America, the pursuit of the Australian animals is just as thrilling and as dangerous as was the hunting of the American beasts.

Australian buffaloes are found chiefly in the vast and sparsely-populated region called the Northern Territory of Australia, and the animals are descendants of Indian wild buffaloes, which were first introduced early in 1824, when

the first British military settlement was established in the Northern Territory.

This settlement was regularly visited by trading vessels from the East Indies, and on one occasion a number of cattle and Indian wild buffaloes were brought from Timor Island, in the Malay Archipelago. These were sold to the military people, and some were killed for meat; but when the settlement was abandoned a few years later, a number of the buffaloes, which had not been slaughtered, were left to their fate in the wild and unexplored country.

These animals did not, as was expected, die out. By some means or other they evaded the spears of the expert native hunters of this region. Like all of their kind which are able to thrive in a country where few other herbivorous animals can exist, they soon established themselves, multiplied rapidly and spread out into new country. Soon tremendous herds of the great grayish beasts roamed the vast open plains, and even crossed to the islands nearer.

It is more than half a century since buffalo hunters first commenced to pursue the creatures for their hides, and, despite the fact that a small army of hunters has been taking a heavy annual toll ever since, the buffaloes are still very plentiful. It is by no means uncommon to see herds of many thousands of the animals, and when the beasts are on the move the pounding of their hoofs shakes the earth in the vicinity, and fills the air with a sound like the roll of distant thunder.

The Australian buffaloes are similar to those of India and North Africa, which are regarded as some of the most powerful and fearless wild beasts known. Of a dark, grayish color, they live in herds, which sometimes consist of thousands of the animals—bulls, cows, and calves—and with each herd there is generally some ancient bull as lord and master. A bull buffalo has more than twice the body bulk of the ordinary working bullock, while his strength is probably equal to that of five or six bullocks. The average bull weighs anything up to a ton.

The monster has a great shaggy head complete with a pair of spreading, corrugated, black horns, which measure anything from five to eight feet across from tip to tip, and nine feet or ten feet around the outer curves. The horns are razor-sharp at the tips, and they are very formidable weapons on a savage bull. And the bull is a fighter in every sense of the word; despite his great bulk he is as active as any other four-footed creature I have ever seen.

The monster carries a valuable hide, which is immensely strong and thick. It makes an excellent coat or rug, and can be split into about twelve thicknesses for use in upholstery and other leather work. The hides bring a ready sale, and the Australian hunters have been trying to develop an export trade in dried and salted buffalo meat. The meat has a taste all of its own, and when one is accustomed to the flavor it is excellent eating.

AUSTRALIA'S most successful hunter is Joseph Cooper, who for many years was hailed as the "Buffalo King of Australia." He was one of the early-day hunters, and during his "reign"—a period of about ten years—he accounted for twenty-seven thousand buffaloes! He made a small fortune from the hides, and then retired. But the record "bag" for one day's hunting stands to the credit of a present-day hunter, James Martin, who not long ago shot forty-eight buffalo bulls in the one day, and to secure those beasts he used only fifty-two cartridges! Both of these records are better than any to the credit of the more famous "Buffalo Bill," who became famous for his hunting among the North American buffaloes.

There is money to be made at buffalo hunting, but it is an occupation that is full of peril, while the hunters have to put up with all sorts of hardships and inconveniences in the semi-civilized country.

The work is invariably carried out on horseback, and the horses are specially trained for the work. A good horse, experienced at the game, fetches anything up to three hundred dollars, or even more. On such splendid horses the hunter rarely touches the reins—the horse

knows exactly what to do. The hunter merely sits on his saddle and shoots—reloads, and shoots,

Sometimes, however, the buffaloes, when pursued, enter boggy or stony country where horses are useless, and then the hunter has to go after them on foot. In either case, the hunter has not only to be a first-class rifle shot, but he must be very fast on his feet. The animals are possessed of a remarkable turn of speed for such heavy creatures, and can turn very swiftly when on the run. A bull invariably turns and charges when pursued, and then the hunter on foot has to dash for the nearest tree and either climb it or shelter behind the trunk and then shoot when the monster comes close enough.

Such a method of hunting requires a great deal of nerve, as a recent experience of one of my hunting friends (Harry Green) shows. Four of us were out that day, and Harry had dismounted from his horse to pursue a buffalo bull into rough country covered by a light forest. He managed to sneak within fifty yards of the bull, and, taking careful aim at the monster's shaggy head, he fired. With a grunt the bull stumbled to the ground, and in order to ascertain whether the shot had been fatal Harry reloaded and foolishly rushed towards the fallen animal. No sooner had he moved than a terrifying bellow from close at hand caused him to turn sharply, when he was horrified to see another bull coming straight towards him at a gallop!

The newcomer, which had apparently been feeding behind a clump of bushes and had been disturbed by the rifle shot, thundered on with lowered head and with his beady eyes glowing red. Harry looked about him quickly. Some fifty yards away was a small ironwood tree, and without a moment's hesitation he darted for it with the buffalo in pursuit.

Harry told us afterwards that as he ran his thoughts were of the many hunters who had been cruelly gored to death by bulls. A buffalo gores, tosses, and then tramples a victim until only a mangled body remains. Fear lent him wings. As he reached the tree, with the buffalo less than five yards behind him, he leaped upwards and grasped a branch with both hands, allowing his rifle to drop to the ground, and swung himself into the air just as the buffalo charged by underneath.

Clambering well up into the tree, Harry looked down. The bull was raging up and down beneath the tree, tearing up the ground with his horns and hoofs, and sending bellow after bellow echoing through the light timber. It was these bellows that attracted our attention, and we were just in time. As we neared the spot the bull, foaming at the mouth, was charging the tree, striking the trunk each time with a tremendous smack, in an endeavor to dislodge his victim. Harry clung tightly to his precarious perch. The tree swayed and creaked ominously, and then the buffalo caught our scent.

Abruptly the monster stopped raging and bellowing and stared in our direction, sniffing lightly. We prepared to shoot, and then the buffalo, catching sight of us, lowered his head and charged forward. He had not traveled far, however, when our rifles spoke and the huge animal crashed down dead with a bullet through his brain. Harry then descended from the tree and went to inspect the first buffalo he had shot. The monster was dead, the bullet having gone through his eye, and his hide proved to be an exceptional one. When dry the hide weighed 162 pounds and it returned a clear profit of twelve cents per pound.

AS soon as a buffalo is killed it is skinned, and for this work natives are usually employed. They are good workers and can be secured for low wages. The skins are tacked on to wooden floors or walls and allowed to dry in the sun; after drying they are treated with a preservative and packed for export.

When pursuing buffaloes on horseback most hunters do not shoot until their horse's head is alongside the bull's ribs. The rifle is aimed for the heart just behind the foreleg, and with the weapon almost touching the animal the trigger is pulled. A well-trained horse leaps promptly away as soon as the rifle speaks, in order that it will not be struck

by the falling buffalo. But sometimes a bull will turn swiftly when on the run and charge the oncoming horseman, and in such a manner many a man and his horse have been fatally gored.

An observant hunter, however, can generally tell when a bull is going to turn and charge by studying his tail. If the bull's tail is tucked between his legs, it is a sure sign that he is going for good as hard as he can, but if his tail is waving to and fro it is a danger sign.

The most remarkable escape from a buffalo that I have ever heard of was that of a hunter named Frank Morris. He was on horseback pursuing a bull, which suddenly turned and buried its horns in the horse's side. The animal reared up, then crashed down to the ground, bringing Morris with it, and before he could rise to his feet the bull was upon him!

With a single sweep of its mighty horns the monster hurled him through the air, to land at least ten feet away in the middle of a clump of bushes!

The buffalo, bellowing savagely, went forward again to the attack, but it could not reach Morris, who lay unconscious among the bushes, and as it paced around the clump, tearing up the ground with its horns, one of Morris's friends galloped up and shot the bull through the back of the head. Morris was hurried to the nearest doctor, over one hundred miles away, when it was found that he had four ribs, a leg, and an arm broken.

Nevertheless, he was very lucky. He made a rapid recovery, and was soon out hunting again. But his horse was so badly gored that it had to be destroyed.

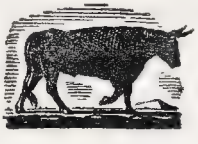
Most of the rivers in the Australian buffalo country are infested with man-eating crocodiles—huge brutes which attain a length of anything up to twenty-five feet. Within recent times many of the buffalo-hunters have been shooting crocodiles as a side-line, for the saurians' skins are in great demand for shoe-leather, etc. Not long ago a party of hunters at Alligator River shot one hundred and twenty crocodiles in two weeks, and for the skins they received approximately one thousand dollars! While hunting this game is not as dangerous as buffalo-hunting, it also has its perils, for crocodiles are very cunning creatures and often feign death.

Men have had their legs smashed by one swish of a wounded crocodile's tail, and we were out on one occasion when a wounded monster knocked one of our native carriers into the water, and then dived in after him. We never saw the poor native again.

Wild pigs are also plentiful in this country, and the wild boars are a real menace, even though the animals are first-class for eating. One boar we shot measured six feet in length, stood three feet high at the shoulder, and had razor-sharp tusks eight inches long. He had a hide nearly half an inch thick, and put up a tremendous fight before he finally died.

Wild duck, wild geese, kangaroos, wallabies, huge snakes (including great pythons up to thirty feet in length), and wild horses, are other game in the Northern Territory of Australia, which is a real hunters' paradise. Only during the "wet" season (from November to March) are hunters unable to work, for then the rivers and creeks become flooded and the whole countryside is turned into a quagmire.

There are parts of the Territory, however, where it is still unsafe for the white man to venture, for there the natives are uncontrolled and are still hostile to all whites. Some of the tribes will attack without the slightest provocation, and some revolting tragedies have occurred within the last few years. But gradually the savages are being brought under control by the police.



THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

ANOTHER man who's ranged and roamed, and then written, joins our Writers' Brigade in this issue.

He is Louis C. Goldsmith, author of "It Must Have Been Jasper." He talks about flying, and he says:

Ideas arrange themselves in queer patterns. I was over in China at the time the Japanese started these last good neighbor overtures and I made a trip up to Nanking to chin a little with Royal Lenord. He flew the plane that kidnapped the Generalissimo a few years ago, and at the time I visited him he was flying a Boeing 247 and a Douglas DC2 for Chiang Kai-Shek and the Madame. I spent a whole day going over a manuscript that he was writing. Good meaty stuff in it that would need considerable editing, and a second story to be read between lines. For no good reason except that, as I have said, one idea arranges itself with others to make strange patterns, I thought of this William Wentley Wens who was an enigma to himself and others. The idea simmered and grew and rearranged itself while I went down to the Philippines and then over to Canton to act as an aviation advisor. I liked it and put it on paper and there it is.

It might be interesting that Royal and I discussed the problem of bombing Kobe and Tokio. We have both had considerable time in instrument-radio flying, and with loop antennas the raids would not be very difficult nor dangerous under the proper cloud conditions. Any old airline pilot will understand why. It is possible that one well planned raid with incendiary bombs over the flimsy Japanese cities would have changed the war. The Chinese realized that, of course, and had the equipment and personnel to do it. I wonder if the proud Japanese Army, Navy and Air Force fully appreciate the greatness of a foe who refuses to slaughter helpless men, women and children just to win a war?

But you wanted to know something about me. It's sort of haphazard. My father was a railroad contractor and I was brung up, to a large extent, under canvas. Then, with a little lying about my age, down to the Mexican Border to learn squads left and

right and overseas the next year to make the world safe for democracy and get part of my jaw shot away with a German shell. Back in the States I had to finish high school to get into the Army Flying Cadets. For some reason or other I thought I could learn to write fiction, so after I got out of the Air Corps I worked my way through a college education, majoring in journalism and barnstorming and running a one-ship flying school weekends and summers. I kept on writing and finally began to sell my stuff and I wandered around a little as a sailor, over to the Orient and one trip on the *Tusitala*, a full-rigged clipper ship. I have an A.B. discharge from the windjammer, of which I am very proud.

But I couldn't stay away from flying. In 1928 started airline flying on the west coast, then was Chief Pilot and finally General Superintendent of a line running from Los Angeles to San Salvador, C. A. Enjoyed that very much. Generally speaking, Mexicans are real folks. That line folded up from lack of funds. I came north and flew for Varney Air Lines and United about seven years. When the radio men and meteorologists started doing the flying and the pilots just wore uniforms and 'yessed', I got out and went to China. I still fly a little, just to keep my hand in, and if I get a chance I'm going to do some Alaskan airline flying. Thar's fictional gold in them thar hills but I can't write a decent story unless I've actually been there.

Hoping to see you all again soon.

WARREN B. SMITH writes to Camp-Fire from Santiago, Chile, to tell us that the trout fishing there is great—better even than his old stamping grounds, the Rogue River — and should any comrades come his way, he'll take a day or two off and—

Having been a constant reader of your magazine for the last fifteen years and very interested in your *Ask Adventure* department, I hereby take exception to Edgar Young's reply to Norman Armor's request on information on hunting and fishing in Chile. Not so much to the hunting part as to the fishing part.

I have made my home in Santiago, Chile, for the last seven years and have taken all my vacations in Chile except one when I went to the States in 1934, so I feel that I know what I am about to state. Further, my home in the States is in Medford, Oregon, which is only eight miles from the justly famous Rogue River.

Chile probably has the best all around trout fishing of any place in the world. I realize that is a rather large statement but one I fully believe, as I have never heard of a better place.

Some twenty years ago, the Direccion General de Pesca y Caza (Fishing and Hunting Department) stocked the streams of Chile with rainbow, steel heads, brown trout and lake trout, and these trout have done wonderfully well in these waters due probably to the lack of natural enemies, the great abundance of food and the fact that there are so many streams in the south that none of them are ever very heavily fished.

Fishing streams begin with the Aconcagua river and all the rivers from there south are stocked with trout down to Puerto Montt, the best and most convenient being the Tolten river which rises in Lake Villarrica and runs west a little south of the town of Temuco, the San Pedro river which rises in Lake Riñehue and runs through the town of Los Lagos and into the Bio-Bio and the Rio Bueno which rises in Lake Ronco and runs west very close to the town of La Union.

The average catch of fish in any one of these rivers is 25 fish of from 2 to 10 lbs. and I have personally caught 60 fish in one days of which 12 were over 5 lbs., the largest being 9½ lbs. The largest fish are caught in the San Pedro river, where in March, 1937, Mr. Humpstone, the general manager for the West India Oil Co., caught one of 19¾ lbs. In March and April of 1938 over ten fish were taken from this river of over 14 lbs., the larger being 17½ lbs.

The fishing season starts October 15 and closes April 15, those being our summer months. The equipment used for the most part is a 5 or 6 oz. 9 ft. rod, a thirty yard double tapered line with 100 yards of silk bocking, nine foot 4/5 leader and 1/0 silver or gold bodied flies. Silver grey, silver doctor, silver wilkerson, Jock Scot, durham ranger, silver blue, Dusty miller and thunder and lightning, being the general collection carried.

There is very fine fishing in all the streams close to Santiago, say within two hours drive by car, but of course these streams are rather small and easy to get at from that point and are rather well fished and the fish do not run nearly as large as in the southern part of the country. Fish in these streams run from ½ lb. up to about 4 lbs.

The best stream is the Pengal which is on the Braden Copper Co. property east of Rancagua at an elevation of about 5000 ft. Fly fishing in this stream can only be done in the Spring before the high block glaciers start to melt and in the Fall after they freeze

up, as all summer long the water from them gives the stream a decided chocolate color.

I am enclosing a picture of one of the catches made in the Tolten to show what kind of sport can be had in this neck of the woods.

To go to the south to Villarrica or Los Lagos, the train leaves at 6:00 P.M. and arrives at Villarrica or Los Lagos at about 11:00 A.M. The round trip including berth is $350.00 Ch.Ccy. which at the present exchange is about $14.00 USCy. Board and room is about $25.00 pesos a day in the hotels or $1.00 USCy. and the boat boy with his boat costs from $1.00 to $2.00 USCy. per day; the difference in price being the different length of the trips. Also there is the taxi back up the river which runs from $2.00 to $3.00 USCy.

As to hunting, Mr. Young is right but he forgot to bring up hunting with a shot gun as quail and partridges are very plentiful, to say nothing of "Tortola" (a species of dove) and "torcasa" (a blue wood pigeon); these last two are really the best shot gun game we have and any time when the season is on it is a very common thing for one hunter to shoot over a hundred shells in a morning. That is not to say that one will get 100 birds because if a person gets 50 per cent he is a pretty fine shot. These birds are about the hardest thing to hit I ever saw, especially the doves.

If any comrades who like to fish or hunt come to Chile, have them look me up and I will be very glad to give them any information that I can on where to go, etc., and if I can get a few days off I might even go along and show them where.

PAUL BUNYAN'S prowess has been underestimated, and some of the real facts about him are now divulged for the first time, thanks to M. E. Nampa of Detroit, Michigan.

Being qualified by long years of Camp-Fire listening I enter my voice in contribution to Paul Bunyan lore.

The question is often raised as to why the mighty Saginaw river is a mighty river at its source, some 18 miles from its mouth. It happened when Paul was a young man recently out of Maine and still inclined to youthful impulse. Looking about for a sling shot crutch he beheld the twin branches of the Saginaw (this and the other) converging just above what is now the city of Saginaw. One branch drained Lake Michigan and the other Lake Erie, to pour their waters into Saginaw Bay via the main Saginaw river.

Paul slashed off this fork to make his crutch for the sling shot and pinged at high flying geese, using glacial nigger-heads for his shot, of which more later. During a careless moment he pinged one off his thumb nail and with his known truculence hurled the crutch to the ground and swore "dass zwei blitzen wasser." Being of French ancestry his feelings ran deep and only when hurt he used his rivals' language, of which he had picked up a smattering from sundry immigrants.

The crutch spattered into numerous rivulets, and the Indians of that period being quite unlettered, corrupted Paul's words into names for the resultant streams: Cass, Flint, Shiawasse and Tittibawassee, which now empty into the basin which makes the head waters of the Saginaw.

The nigger-heads which Paul shot high fell in the vicinity of Alpena and formed those mysterious devil's pot holes where later loggers were wont to ride a saw log on a spring freshet, to come up split-seconds later in Thunder Bay still in the act of lighting their pipes. One of his nibbs fell short and formed Bulls Gap on the Au Sable gorge, but souvenir hunters have carried it away piecemeal. Another went over into the upper peninsula and its roll created the bed of the Slapneck river. At the moment of his aim a gaboon-billed mosquito drilled into Paul's neck to cause a muscular spasm, often noticed in lumber mill boilers that were drained by this pest.

Often of a still day the roar of Paul's coal burning eight (feet) bore scatter gun echoed and re-echoed from the Ontanogan to the Tahquamenon, causing deep fear in the local fauna. One time as Paul drowsed, an old she bear crawled into the barrel of his gun, which she had mistaken for a log. In the marsh hay wadding she formed her home to rear a family. Later on Paul took a shot at a wandering bruin and was amazed to see said bear double in size, instead of pitching over. The bear in his gun and her family were welded, as it were, into the other bear and thus was created ursus horriblis bunyanii. This bear found Michigan too small and migrated westward.

Before Paul logged off Michigan and moved westward he had not heard of the nose paint called Green River and was content to satisfy his thirst from the head waters of the Blue Moustache. Babe, his blue ox, also drank from same and its potent water, which caused that well-known phenomenon of coloration in her hair and Paul's whiskers. This is solemn gospel, and other theories may be now discarded.

WE RECEIVED the following letter from Kunming, Yunnan, China. The name of the writer is withheld at his request and, also confidential to us, he sends us his record of about twenty years of flying.

I have been a constant reader of *Adventure* since 1913 and take a great deal of pride in the fact that I can sit far back in the shadows

while the real adventurers tell their tales of fact and fiction in the bright light of the Camp-Fire. Having followed the magazine so long through trials and troubles, I also feel proud of its clean fiction and honest fact stories.

With no talent for spinning tales myself, I accord full latitude to those who have the gift. I am not critical of minor inconsistencies and have never written a letter criticizing an article or story in *Adventure*. However, I cannot refrain from exposing the story in the August, 1938, issue, "I Shoot Down a Japanese Bomber, a fact story, by Capt. R. W. Martin."

Since the action occurred in a Hawk 75, I will first discuss the author's statements concerning "Old Betsy," page 113.

For eight months after Martin's departure from Nanking, there was only one—*not* two or three—75's in China. I was one of the pilots of that plane and I know that Martin never even sat in the cockpit on the ground. That particular 75 did *not* have four Browning 50 caliber machine guns in it, it did *not* have a twin row, 1150 horse power Wasp engine; it has a fixed landing gear and so does *not* require pressing a button to let the wheels down for a landing. That plane was built by the Curtiss Aeroplane Division, Buffalo, N. Y., and the above details can be checked by reference to Col. Burdette S. Wright, President of the Division.

Omitting further details of Martin's purely imaginary flights in the Hawk 75, the following information concerning Martin's true experiences in China is offered. He came to China at the expense of Chinese American citizens after having represented himself as an expert bombardment pilot who was anxious to bomb Tokyo. He was received courteously at Hongkong and sent up to Nanking at the expense of the Chinese government.

Arriving at Nanking, he was given a test flight in a training plane. He explained his poor performance *after* this flight on the grounds that he hadn't flown in several months. He was then interviewed with a view to employing him as a combat pilot in bombardment. During this interview, the blood-thirsty Mr. Martin stated that he had no faintest desire to be a bombardment combat pilot but would like a job as an instructor. He could produce no credentials or proof of specialized training or experience at instructing, so was not engaged for that work.

A day or so prior to this interview, Martin had witnessed the shooting down of a Japanese dive bomber in flames by anti-aircraft fire.

Martin was never a pilot for Madame Chiang Kai-shek. He is a type who would like to be a bold adventurer but lacks the training, and other qualities required.

In vindication of the good name of *Adventure* as well as of those Americans in China who are conscientiously performing the duties for which they are paid, it is requested that this letter be published in the Camp-Fire columns. For personal reasons not connected with this particular matter, I would prefer that my name not be used. However, I have no objection to your confronting Martin with my letter and name. I assure you that he will recognize the latter.

It was with me that Martin had his final interview in Nanking when he disclaimed any desire to do combat flying in China.

Martin made only one flight while in China, two landings in a Curtiss 19R trainer with an American check pilot who reported his flying as very unsatisfactory. His heroic combats with the Japs and his personal piloting for Madame Chiang Kai-shek are purely fictitious. I know this to be a fact because one of my duties at that time was the examination, checking and assignment of all foreign volunteers.

For immediate reference regarding my reliability, you may call Cy Caldwell, Aero Digest; Bob Lea, vice-president, the Sperry Co.; Colonel "Tony" Frank, C. O. Mitchell Field, L. I.; or Bill Pawley, President Intercontinent Corporation.

With best wishes for the continued success of the magazine, I am

Most sincerely,

THE article had been written in evident good faith by a writer whose integrity has been demonstrated for some years, and since his name did not appear on the story it seems not unreasonable to withhold it now. Through this man's literary agent, who had submitted the article, we forwarded the above letter, with instructions to get a reply from R. W. Martin. We have this response from the writer:

This puts me in a rather embarrassing spot, as I did the article "I Shoot Down a Japanese Bomber," from notes "Captain" R. W. Martin dictated to me. I still have the notes. But here are the facts:

Last December Martin came back from China to Los Angeles. He was looking around for a writer to ghost-write his exploits; and because I have something of a reputation (*Ken, Esquire, Coronet, Popular Aviation*, etc.) for writing aviation stuff, he got in touch

with me through one of the fellows at a local airport.

According to his story, he had just gotten out of the scrap in Spain and returned to Seattle when a representative of the Chinese Government approached him with an offer to take a new Glen Martin bomber and raid Tokyo. He had gone to China for that purpose. As it happened, he was at the airport in Shanghai one morning when Madame Chiang Kai-shek wanted someone to fly her down the river to Nanking, and he did the job in her big Douglas DC-3. He said she liked his flying so well she hired him as personal pilot and that he flew her over most of south China. He claimed, while dictating his stuff, that he could produce (and would produce) a letter from Madame Chiang—as well as one from Haile Selassie—proving that he had been her personal pilot, before going into combat work.

The reason why he couldn't produce them (for a few days) was the fact that they were in a suitcase being held by the steamship company which had brought him and the other 26 pilots back from China; yanked out by the American Consul.

It was the pictures he had taken that convinced me. Some of them showed him standing in a bombed Chinese town (Nanking, I imagine) with the smoke and dust still in the air. He had an arm around an aged Chinese in one of them. It showed the wreckage of the bomber he supposedly knocked down—the first foreign pilot to shoot down a Jap bomber, he said. There was a picture of a Jap gunner who supposedly had tried to jump from the doomed ship and his chute failed to open, lying on his back in a marsh. Martin had the "pocket knife taken from his body." Seventeen very good pictures in all.

It was these remarkably good pictures, plus his willingness to produce the letter from Madame Chiang as soon as he could get the $109 due the steamship company, which sold me. I agreed to write up his exploits.

You know the rest. I did three articles. One sold to *Adventure*, another to (_____) the third to (_____). This last named has not been published and I shall stop it.

Needless to say, I've just hit out to the airport where he used to hang out while in Los Angeles, and Mr. Martin is not to be found.

If this comes to the attention of R. W. Martin and he wishes to make a reply to the letter from China, we shall be glad to hear from him.

H. B.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

THE next issue marks the start of a new serial, "Peace Marshal," by Frank Gruber. It's a story of the old West, when railroads crept toward the setting sun, and wild Texas men drove wild Texas cattle up the Chisholm Trail, and a town made its laws by one man's guns—as long as he could keep alive to wear his star.

in the same issue—

"Three Mad Sergeants," a novelette of the Legion by Georges Surdez; a story of the North woods, "Hung Drive," by Robert Pinkerton; "One Stayed, One Went," a story of the first iron ships, by H. Bedford-Jones; a whaling story, "Wet-Eared Pup," by Warren F. Robinson; a fact story by Jack Tooker, famous hunter of mountain lions, about a brush with death in the Kaibab country; and other good yarns about the world's far places.

Watch for them in the February issue of

Adventure 15c

On sale at all stands
January 10th

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

THREE men in a boat on the Yukon.

Request:—Next summer two friends and myself plan to take a trip to Alaska. We'd like to voyage from Fairbanks to the Yukon's mouth. Is this an advisable trip in a three man boat? If so, how long would it take and when is a good time to attempt the trip?

Have you any idea of the cost of such a voyage?

—Michael P. Mulhall,
Grangeville, Idaho

Reply by Mr. T. S. Solomons:—You can go to Fairbanks for something under a hundred dollars each and if you buy a boat there you might save some money over the cost of procuring your craft in Seattle and shipping it by steamer and railroad to Fairbanks. But you would have to take chances on obtaining just the sort of boat you wanted in Fairbanks, if you are particular. The place is quite a large one and well equipped to make or remodel or repair a boat. I think I'd take chances, if I were in your place.

If you do a job of hand-tacking down the river, i.e., rowing for steerage way, otherwise drifting, it will take you several weeks at least. The current is slow and the rivers wind a lot. If in the fall you have to know something about the channel, unless you are river men and can sort of see it ahead as you go—not always easy! It's a nice trip, though the last few hundred miles and on into the delta of the Yukon are pretty low and monotonous. And you'll have about sixty or eighty miles of Behring sea shore to negotiate to get to St. Michael to connect with the ocean steamers. But if you buy a motor boat, or take an outboard motor with you, of course that changes matters. You can go it in half the time or less. July or August would be the best months. September is getting a bit late, cold at night; late September freezing in the still water. That time has its advantages—berries, good game and fish, clearer marked channels, and freedom from insect life. But late August is almost as good—and warmer. Be sure and get the hydrographic charts for channel detail, especially for down toward the delta. Or you could stop at Kaltag or in there, dispose of your boat and cut across the portage to Unalakleet and then to St. Michael, thus eliminating a long and monotonously insipid leg of your journey.

The cost question, as you see, depends on the boat. Food for the boat trip would be like grub here for the week or so to several weeks, plus say 25 or 30 percent. Of general outfit you probably have enough now to do you if you are accustomed to outing at all.

ALEI for a bicyclist.

Request:—I'd like to know if it is practical to bicycle around the Hawaiian Islands. My friend and I plan to use this method of transportation, since we must be very careful with our cash. Will you please send me any information that you may have that will give me a clearer idea of the Islands and how to get around them at a minimum of expense?

Any suggestions as to the most economical way to get over there would be greatly appreciated. Thanks for any aid you may be able to give me in this matter.

—Kenneth Swinton,
Salt Lake City, Utah.

Reply by Mr. John Snell:—It is perfectly practical to bicycle around all of the four major islands in the group—Oahu, on which Honolulu is situated, Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai. In fact, this is probably the best

way in which to see our "Paradise of the Pacific," if your legs can bear up under the strain.

It is about one hundred miles around the island of Oahu, which is the principal island in the group, on an excellently paved federal-aid highway. On this trip, it will be necessary for you to climb a rather steep road leading up to the Pali, one of the chief scenic attractions on this island. It is a gap in the mountain range which separates the island virtually in two, and is famous for the fact that King Kamehameha the Great, when he conquered the island with his army, landed at Waikiki Beach from the island of Hawaii, his original stronghold, and drove the defending forces of Oahu up to this cliff and forced the Oahu army over the cliff to death on the jagged rocks hundreds of feet below, where even today skulls and bones are found.

The road around the island of Hawaii, or the "Big Island," is two hundred and fifty miles long, also on well paved federal-aid highways. Twenty-nine miles from the city of Hilo, the chief port on this island is the ever active volcanic pit of Mokuaweoweo and Kilauea Craters, around which there is one section of the Hawaii National Park.

Far above you will be the summit of Mauna Loa, where the hardier residents of Hawaii enjoy winter sports such as skiing, and to the north, still farther away, will be the snow-capped summit of the great volcano of Mauna Kea.

On the island of Maui, it is possible to bicycle for eighty miles from Honokohua to Kaupo, also on a federal-aid highway. If you desire to visit the summit of the great volcano of Haleakala (House of the Sun), now extinct, this can be done by branching off for twenty miles from the main highway. At the top of Haleakala there is a rest house where it would be possible for you to spend a night without charge and view the sunrise from this elevation. This is believed to be one of the most unusual experiences to be found in the world.

On the island of Kauai, the oldest and most northern of the archipelago, it is possible to travel for sixty miles from Mana to Hanalei Bay. On this trip, you will see the famous barking sands at Mana Beach on the western coast, and also will be able to visit the highly colored Waimea Canyon, twenty-eight hundred and fifty feet deep, which is a miniature of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

I doubt very much if you would wish to visit the four smaller islands in the group. There is nothing of very great interest on the island of Molokai except the Hoolehua Settlement of the Hawaiian Homes Commission, which differs in no element from pineapple canneries you will find on the major islands, and the Leper Settlement at the eastern tip of the island. To visit this settlement, you must first obtain the permission of the Territorial Board of Hospitals and Settlements, which is not usually given unless for a very good reason over and beyond simple sightseeing.

The island of Lanai is owned in its entirety by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, and is nothing but one great pineapple plantation. The island of Niihau, owned by the estate of Gay and Robinson, Limited, is inhabited by a small group of full-blooded Hawaiians who have virtually no contact with the rest of the Territory, due to the desires of the owners to keep these people uncontaminated by the influences of civilization and as a living reminder of the days that once were in Old Hawaii. The tiny island of Kahoolawe is but a barren rock.

As far as the matter of expense is concerned, it will cost you just as little or just as much as you desire to spend. Hotel charges at various points of interest are not unreasonably high, except at the so-called "show places." You will find the climate of Hawaii so equable that it is possible to sleep out of doors if you so desire.

The most economic way of reaching the Territory from the Mainland would be to work your way down aboard one of the many vessels which come to the Territory from the Coast, but you may have some difficulty in obtaining a job because, as I understand it, you must be a member of one of the Seamen's Unions in order to get a job. The minimum first-class rate from the Coast to Hawaii is $125; second-class, $85.

Should you make the trip, I strongly advise you to be sure that you have sufficient funds with which to defray the cost of your return passage to the Coast before coming to Hawaii, because the Territory, in common with the rest of the United States at present, is under the black shadow of the terrible bugaboos of recession and unemployment, and it is all but impossible for a casual visitor from the Mainland to obtain a job.

ELECTRIFYING the fish net.

Request:—Do Japanese fishermen use floats made of glass for any type of fishing net?

These floats, I understand, are usually green, and round, ranging from two to eighteen inches in diameter.

—John Drebot,
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Seward S. Cramer:—Japanese fishermen most certainly do use glass floats on their fishing nets. These glass floats take the place of the cork blocks that American fishermen favor. I have never seen any as small as two inches in diameter nor as large as eighteen but I have no doubt that these sizes are used and, perhaps, are quite common. Nor is green necessarily the standard color—in fact there is no effort to add color to these globes, the green tinge comes from natural refraction and continued immersion in salt water.

Very often during heavy storms, the nets will become torn and the globes liberated and frequently they will be carried across the Pacific by currents and washed up on the California shores. These are really very interesting and quite worthwhile souvenirs.

I do not know how much longer these special globes will be used as I understand that there is a movement on foot now to change this custom. The Japanese manufacture great quantities of cheap electric light bulbs and there is no ready reuse for the worn out bulb. They are now trying to have these bulbs replace the more picturesque globes. I believe that they got this idea from the Italians who have been using worn out bulbs as net floats for some time.

THE finicky sturgeon.

Request:—I live on the Columbia River near the mouth of the Snake River which abounds (I hope) with sturgeon. As the Washington laws have closed the season on these fish till recently, it is hard to find anyone here who fished for them prior to the closing. I wonder if you could give me any help on the subject.

The law will allow a trot line or set line or lines. The law says "no line shall have attached to it more than fifteen hooks, and said hooks to be at least seven feet apart, not to be operated as a snag or Chinese sturgeon line."

The Snake, in fishing season (April to July), is high and exceedingly muddy. Should these lines be moderately weighted to stream down stream a few feet above the river bed or let swing at will? How should the outer end of the line be anchored? What size rope for short set line; what size hooks? And kind of bait? Eels obtainable, also suckers, steelhead and salmon. Would tainted meat be advisable? As there are usually trees, frame buildings, etc., in the water in flood stage would it be advisable to run lines lengthwise with stream instead of across, or figure on weighting deep enough to avoid such?

To help you advise size of hooks, no sturgeon can be kept under four feet in length, so you figure their size a little vaguely perhaps, but one's head recorded here, weighed eighty-five pounds. Not forgetting necessary reduction for fish stories one tells of his father catching one of fifteen hundred pounds. I don't want to use a whaling vessel, so if you can advise me on this, I'll be much obliged.

—Bill McCain,
Kennewick, Wash.

Reply by Mr. John Thompson:—I cannot advise you whether fishing for sturgeon would pay you or not. You can't tell how they are going to bite or how long, since they are sluggish fellows in that respect at the best.

If you use a trot line you ought to fish across stream with it. Keep enough sinkers so that the bait will stay right on the bottom. No. 12 trot line should be about the right size and No. 8/0 good quality Kirby or Limerick hooks. Spoiled meat is taken by these fish at times. They will occasionally feed on a dough ball made of half wheat flour, half corn meal, with a little ground meat and cottton mixed into it.

Dead salt fish sometimes proves good bait, especially suckers. They will also take bullfrogs in some localities when they will not touch anything else. As a rule sturgeon are very undependable feeders on any kind of bait. Use a big rock to anchor the end of your line while using it across stream. If you leave end unanchored it will whip everywhere and get into trouble.

CHEROKEE bows and arrows.

Request:—I am writing for some information on the bows used by the Cherokee Indians of Tennessee and North Carolina.

What length were they? Shape? What wood used? Did they back these weapons?

—Lowell Mattox,
Decatur, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—According to Mr. M. R. Harrington, who worked among the Cherokee some years ago, their bows were five feet long, rectangular in section, 1½ to 2 inches wide and ½ to ¾ inch in thickness. A man who was among this tribe in 1756-1765 stated that several kinds of wood were used and after being dipped in bear's oil they were seasoned before the fire. He also stated that the string was made of twisted bear's gut. Mr. Harrington found the Cherokee using tough, twisted woodchuck skin for bow cords. The Yuchi Indians, who

were neighbors of the Cherokee, used staves of Osage Orange and to a lesser degree staves of hickory and sassafras wood. The Yuchi bows were quite similar to the Cherokee, being 5 feet long, wider in the middle at the hand grip, being about 1½ inches in width at that point and tapering to one inch at the ends. The Yuchi stave was about ¾ inches thick. Hence you can see these bows were practically identical in appearance. Then too the Yuchi greased their bows, as did the Cherokee.

Arrows of the Cherokee were about 3 ft. long. Anciently the Cherokee used small slender triangular arrow points and points made of deer antler tips hollowed out and slipped over the end of the shaft and held in place by native glue. Arrows were made of cane or straight twigs of arrow wood. In the middle of the 18th century the Cherokee also used thin copper and brass arrowheads cut in triangular form. Another type of head was made from the scales of a large fish, probably a gar, the latter heads were fashioned with barbs. Bone and antler were also used at that time. In the case of the fish scale, brass and copper points they punched little holes through the arrowheads and passed a sinew cord through the holes. The end of the shaft was then split, the head inserted and lashed in place. The sinew was moistened with spittle and when it dried the blade was held firmly in the socket.

Shafts were fletched with split turkey or hawk feathers. There were only two feathers on a shaft. The Yuchi, and probably the Cherokee, twisted these split feathers as they lashed them to the shaft with sinew, the result was that the arrow flew forward with a rotary motion like a rifle bullet. These feathers were cut square across the base and tapered at the other end.

WORLD circling motorcyclists.

Request:—Will you send me some information about the mechanics, rules and regulations concerning motorcycles? Can you tell me whether anyone has ever gone all around the world on a motorcycle?

—C. Wtorek.
Hamtramck, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Charles M. Dodge:—There have been whole volumes written about the regulations, mechanics and racing rules of motorcycling, and for me to try embracing them all in a single letter would be an impossibility. However, I'd suggest you first write to the American Motorcycle Association, 8 East Long Street, Columbus, Ohio—sending them a quarter for the latest A.M.A. rule book. This contains all the information you'll ever need covering rules for every possible kind of motorcycle competitive event you ever heard of and a good many that will probably be new to you. Then if you want additional dope on care and upkeep of your motorcycle send to Uncle Frank, c/o The Motorcyclist, 706 Union League Bldg., Los Angeles, California. He'll answer any request promptly with a little book called Questions and Answers which will give you considerable excellent information for 75c.

Yes, the trip around the world on a motorcycle has been made, and not long ago either. This trip was accomplished by a fellow named Robert Edison Fulton, Jr., and he covered 40,000 miles over about a year and a half. He has recently published a book about this trip, called "ONE MAN CARAVAN" which is currently running in the Motorcyclist Magazine, starting with last month. He went through England, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Djebeldruze, United States, Japan, China, Indo-China, Siam, Malaya, D.E.I., Afghanistan, Waziristan, India and Irak, among other spots, and had a very exciting time of it indeed by the time he reached home again.

JOSEPH LITTLE, of St. Louis, wants to know if Major Hunter, under whom he served, didn't shoot down some balloons as well as eight planes.

I read a list by Major Falk Harmel tabulating the leading American aces in the late war and their victories.

The list included Capt. Frank O'D. Hunter, whom he credited with eight enemy planes, but not a balloon did he mention.

I'm an airplane mechanic, and I soldiered under the captain, who was at the time adjutant to Major Carl Spatz, in command of the 17th pursuit group at March Field, Calif.

It seemed to be common knowledge in the ranks that Capt. Hunter had accounted for at least two balloons, officially. I remember reading an account of it in some publication that slips my mind just now.

Being in close contact with him daily, the captain's forceful personality made a lasting impression on me. By the way, he carries the rank of major now, according to Army-Navy news.

I'll wager that an account of his occasional eccentricities, bluff manner and rather hectic exploits would, if published, abruptly dispel any attack of ennui. The major has been places and done things. What's more, he's still in action. More power to him, says I.

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Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 30A W. Cook Av., Libertyville, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt water; bottom fishing, surf casting, trolling; equipment and locations.* C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*

Health Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo; the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping — MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 161 Ferguson Av., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No 3, BOX 69. Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns:*foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—CHIEF STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

The Merchant Marine. GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road. Roselle Park. N J

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—MAJOR GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 708 Angenette Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands — WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Yatina," 3 Lucknow St., Willoughby, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

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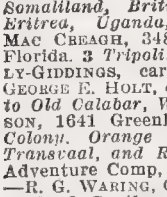
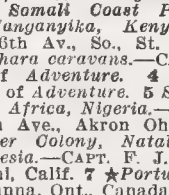
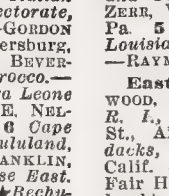
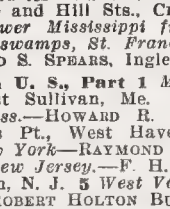
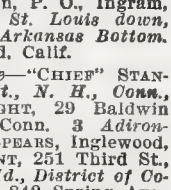

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29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05	31x4	2.95	1.25	34x4½	3.45 1.45
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15	32x4	2.95	1.25	30x5	3.65 1.65
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25	33x4	2.95	1.25	33x5	3.75 1.75
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25	34x4	3.25	1.35	35x5	3.95 1.75
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25	32x4½	3.35	1.45		
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25	**HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES** (High Pressure)				
5.25-17	2.90	1.35					
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35	Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires Tubes
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35	30x5	$4.25	$1.95	34x7	$10.95 $4.65
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35	33x5	3.95	1.75	38x7	10.95 4.65
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35	34x5	4.25	2.25	36x8	11.45 4.95
5.50-17	3.35	1.40	32x6	7.95	2.95	36x8	11.45 4.95
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40	36x6	9.95	4.45	40x8	13.25 4.95
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.25	**TRUCK BALLOON TIRES**				
6.00-17	3.40	1.40	Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires Tubes
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40	6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65	7.50-20	$6.95 $3.75
31x6.00-19	3.45	1.45	6.50-20	4.45	1.95	8.25-20	8.95 4.95
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55	7.00-20	5.95	2.95	9.00-20	10.95 5.65
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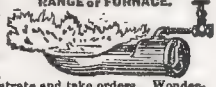

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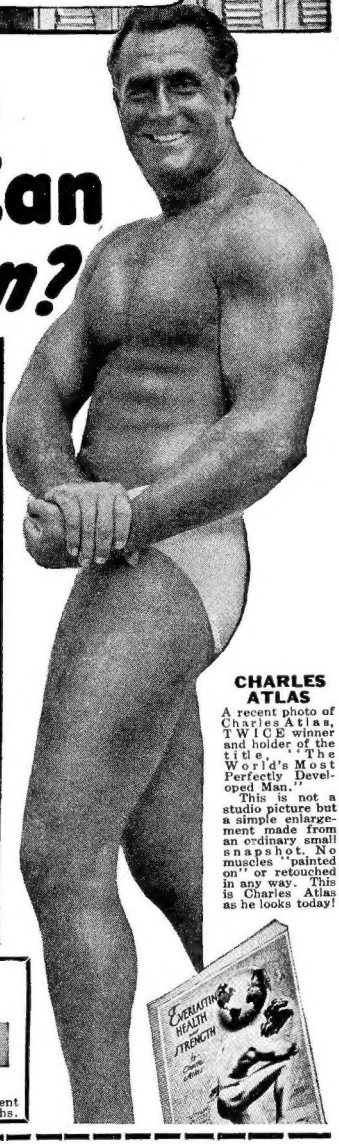

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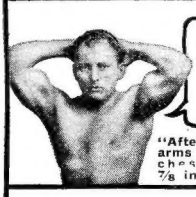
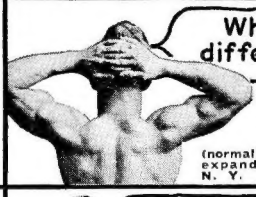
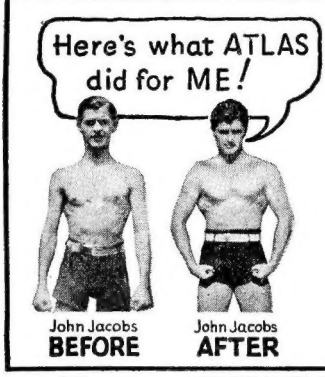


"After ONE WEEK my arms increased 1½ in., chest 2 in., forearm ⅞ in."—C. S., W. Va.



"Started a week ago. Have put 3½ in. on chest (normal) and 2½ in. expanded."—F. S., N. Y.



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